

at the eye of the hurricane

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at the eye of the hurricane

by [Borashore](#)

Summary

Stephen Strange wishes for the hundredth time that hour that he'd just stayed in his apartment all those years ago and hadn't needed to go to a blasted party that left him in a car crash. Cursing anything and everything that had led up to this moment in time.

A multiverse.

Loki Odinson was a dead man. (God. Sorcerer. Whatever.)

Notes

I finally folded. I wrote Marvel fanfiction. And it's this of all things. How exciting!!

Warning yall, this is purely self indulgent and its basically just me wanting to see Mobius in the rest of the MCU and thinking about what he'd do.

This was so much fun to write, I hope yall enjoy it too!

-Lily

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Master of the Mystic Arts

“I should’ve left the jackass falling for a millenia.” Stephen Strange hisses under his breath, wishing for the hundredth time that hour that he’d just stayed in his apartment all those years ago and hadn’t needed to go to a blasted party that left him in a car crash. Cursing anything and everything that had led up to this moment in time.

Specifically this very moment: 4:00 am on a Wednesday, chilly January weather blowing outside in a conveniently violent manner that pretty much reflects the growing dread expanding in his chest. Figures he might as well specify now that time itself means jackshit since it’s bending over backwards, forwards and tearing itself apart like a pair of cable headphones playing a fucked up version of Twister.

“I’m going to fucking kill him.”

And yeah, he’s had a few hunches about who or what could’ve unleashed this madness about the first five minutes after he woke up, but after further consideration, he has only one culprit.

I mean, this whole ordeal has chaos written all over it.

Stephen worries at his bottom lip, using the Eye of Agamotto (hastily thrown on in a craze as he tried to get his bearings once the timeline went to shit) to shift and twist the glowing representation of their Timeline floating a few feet above the wooden floor tiles, wisps of white branching out into oranges, reds and yellows, growing bigger and longer and twistier and a lot more solid every second that passes. Every choice, every thought, every contemplation-- any moment a creature in existence acts on their newly obtained free will (which, by the way, was a mere figment a few hours ago apparently? What else could explain this mess?!) births a new set of events and their succession. Universes upon universes upon universes.

A multiverse.

Loki Odinson was a dead man. (God. Sorcerer. Whatever.)

“Damn it,” Another branch extends from the main trunk, floating and snaking its way toward Stephen’s coffee machine. “This is a nightmare.”

He has no idea how he’s going to solve this. Who thought it’d be a good idea to leave this to him, anyway? He’s an idiot. Surely, the Ancient One knew this.

The branch fazes through the coffee machine.

“Okay, game plan,” Stephen straightens up and lets the glowing model fizzle into the air. He pinches the bridge of his nose.

The Cloak of Levitation gingerly floats by the sidelines, unsure whether its attempts at comfort would be of any help. It stays stationary.

Stephen appreciates the sentiment overall.

“So, we have no idea where Loki is, don’t we?” He speaks into the room. Which, no-- it wouldn’t be right. He’d be able to tell where Loki is on the timeline. He’s seeked him out before, back when Ragnarok was imminent. He was able to find both him and his brother, Thor.

So him not being able to find Loki means he shouldn't be focusing on *where*, but *when*.

Stephen's already tampered with the art of manipulating space and time. Even travel through the former (warping to the snowy Alps during his training, transporting the Odinsons to his Sanctum Sanctorum, opening portals for everyone during the battle against the Mad Titan, etcetera.), but *time*? *Time travel*? Pinpointing a singular creature in a twisting mass of realities, being able to transport them and warp them from one universe onto another as well as through whatever stations of time necessary to reach him here? Intact? By his power alone?

He needs a drink.

Soft caresses on his shoulders morph into a warm embrace as the Cloak settles on his form, offering a grounding presence.

(That's right, you idiot. You don't need a drink. What you need is a tracker. You need help.)

Stephen eyes the empty space where the miniature multiverse stood a few minutes ago. He needs Thor.

But Thor's in space.

And space isn't the same as some sidewalk in Norway.

He doesn't have the time (funny) to work on searching for him. He needs a dependable ally now.

Stephen thinks for a moment. The Cloak gives a reassuring squeeze.

With a wave of a hand and orange runes flashing from his palms, the miniature multiverse comes to life once more. The green glow of the Time Stone helps Stephen effectively mold the model in real time, as it continues to manifest.

Decidedly, Stephen tracks down his own timeline (Not that hard. It's that big, intimidating string of white at the center of it all) and tries his best to pinpoint the exact location where the chaos sprung.

He draws a blank.

His face sours and he scourges the model again. There had to be a catalyst somewhere. Anywhere on the timeline. There's nowhere else to *be*-- to exist. Time is a (fucked up) spectrum of existence. There's nothing outside of it. Nothing. It's only logical.

Stephen pauses.

If he was dealing with the Norse god of mischief, then should he really be drawing his conclusions from logic?

God, what if...

His eyes chance a glance at the very edges of his model, the immense strand elongating across the space of his study, bending this way and that to accommodate to the barriers. Stephen narrows his eyes, catching a glimpse of... something... and strides toward it.

Once standing before it, he notices it. At the very tip, no branches are produced, It just wiggles and slides across the air, but it never births anything. It's like a pocket. Where time is at standstill, never actively growing.

The orange of his runes change into an emerald green as he zooms in on that particular spot. Then

he feels it.

Chaos.

With newly acquired conviction (and one hell of an infuriating grudge to uphold on the damn god), he magics his robes onto his person and vanishes.

It's a wasteland.

"And who are *you* supposed to be?"

And there's a child here. With a crocodile.

"He's an alligator!" The kid barks out when Stephen dumbfoundedly points it out. "And he's sensitive about it, don't be rude."

"Apologies." Stephen says because, honestly? What the fuck.

The alligator hisses. The kid looks up at him again, "He says you should count your days."

"Lovely."

This was both everything and not at all what he was expecting. He wishes he had that drink now.

"What's your name?" The kid asks, a bit nastily if Stephen is allowed to acknowledge it.

"I'm Stephen Strange," He says. "You wouldn't happen to know a certain green trickster with an overwhelming amount of power and a lethal amount of a god complex?"

"Oh, do you mean Loki?"

Well that was conveniently quick. "Yes."

"You're looking at him."

A blink. "Pardon?"

"My name. It's Loki." The kid nods his head toward the alligator. "His name is Loki too."

"Uh huh."

"Say, are you friends with Mobius? Did you fix everything? Kill the Timekeepers?"

What in the world was this kid saying. "I'm not following-- Who's Mobius?"

The kid-- Loki, he says-- studies him for a beat. Then, "So you're *not* aligned with Mobius?"

"Uh--"

"Perfect." Loki sags into himself and absentmindedly pats the alligator's (also Loki) head. "Just perfect. I knew they weren't coming back for me."

"They?" Stephen manages.

“Mobius, Sylvie and Loki.”

His interest piques at that. “Another Loki?”

Kid Loki (might as well) nods.

“What does he look like?”

“Oh, about your height, black hair like mine, wearing a white shirt and tie and brandishing my dagger I lent him. Won’t be getting that back either.”

“White shirt and tie?”

“Uh huh.”

Stephen expected a fancy black suit to accompany that description, but this was good enough.

“Know where they went?”

“To face Alioth, but he’s dead, so I don’t know where else. Maybe beyond that, but whatever place was there is gone.”

Lovely. “Know who might know, then?”

Kid Loki tilts his head. “Well, Sylvie was off with Loki, so I guess Mobius would know.”

Mobius, huh? “And his location? Know it?”

“The TVA.”

“And that is…”

“Outside of time, naturally.”

Well.

That settled it, then.

“Great, thanks, kid.” Stephen goes to walk off. Then pauses midstep.

He turns. “Got anywhere to return to?”

Kid Loki’s face grows cold. The alligator Loki hisses and whips its tail out. “No, not really.”

Stephen hums. “Anywhere you *want* to be then?”

Kid Loki’s eyes blink in surprise, the edges eroding at the question. “Uh…” He exchanges glances with his companion (or at least, he thinks he does. It’s an *alligator*). “Asgard.” Is his answer.

Stephen nods and produces a portal with a swish of his arm. It hovers above the ground, like a tempting beacon. Kid Loki watches it in awe.

“Okay, walk right through. It’ll take you where you want to be.”

The kid hesitates. “Are you sure?”

There’s really no good answer for that at the moment. Time has shattered and a billion different Asgards are being created by the second. He is positive, however, that the intentions behind his

spell can lead the kid to a desired location. Maybe an Asgard missing a Loki of their own. That'd be fun.

"Yeah, go ahead."

Both the kid and the alligator end up going through the portal. Kid Loki stands before it, a heavy weight actively being released before his very eyes. He looks up at Stephen. "Thanks."

Stephen nods. They go through; the portal closes.

Now, he's gotten valuable information. His trickster is still on the run, but now he's got a potential Loki tracker.

Mobius of the TVA.

Should be easy to find him.

It's not.

"God damn it!" Stephen slams his hands on his desk, sending papers filled with dried patches of ink, spells and enchantments fluttering to the ground. "Why can't I find the damn TVA?"

The thing about being a Sorcerer Supreme is that you're able to control and supervise over all of time. Outside of it, though?

Not so much.

He draws out a heavy sigh as he sinks into his chair, sunken eyes getting tired of looking at white and orange and yellow and red.

He's tried everything. And still he can't break out of the barrier of time. It's very upsetting.

The Cloak of Levitation brushes at his cheek. Stephen lets it for a few seconds before batting it away.

Just what was he doing wrong?

Was he looking at this from the wrong angle?

Stephen twists his head to the side as he eyes the model, just for the hell of it.

It doesn't get any better.

He hides his face in his hands and groans into them. Just how was he going to find this Mobius guy if he couldn't even break out of the timeline territory to search for him? Unbelievable.

The Eye of Agamotto hums at his chest. Confused, he looks down at it. It hums again, glowing a tad bit brighter.

Now he knows some Infinity Stones work by the bearer's intentions and will. It's how you even manage to acquire the Soul Stone in the first place. So this little behavior was peculiar.

Stephen watches it for a few more seconds before the multiverse model suddenly lurches into itself and starts rapidly zooming into a particular point on the original timeline. He watches shell-shocked as it zooms and zooms and zooms and zooms and finally-- it stops.

He lifts a palm to examine it.

Fremont, Ohio; 2018.

“Oh my God.” Stephen awes. “Mobius.”

He steps out into what he quickly deems as a highschool. More precisely, one of its hallways.

There’s voices coming in from behind a shut door to his right.

Well, Stephen Strange doesn’t have time for fucking doors.

He kicks it open.

About five heads turn his way, two women and three men; Three of them wear armor, a lady stands in pink and a man in a beige suit sits by the desk.

The man in the suit balks. “Doctor Strange?”

Stephen points at him. “Mobius, I presume?”

The man hesitates before nodding.

“Perfect, we’re already well acquainted, then.” Stephen lifts both hands. “You’re coming with me.”

“What?” Mobius gets out before a portal opens beneath him and he falls through with a shout.

Everyone else gapes at the spot where he once stood. They turn to Stephen.

“Right,” He says. “Bye.”

He leaves.

“Wow,” Mobius drawls out a long whistle. “This place is magnificent.”

“Yes, wonderful,” Stephen vaguely responds occupied with arranging his desk and grabbing at the according papers. Damn it, where was the summoning sigil? “Don’t touch anything.”

“Hm?”

Stephen turns. Mobius stands by the bookshelves, patting the Cloak of Levitation as if it were some kind of cat.

Baffling.

“Right, uh--” He clears his throat. “So, Mobius....?”

“Just Mobius,” The man scratches at the back of the collar, like he would to a dog’s ears. The Cloak trills and ripples with joy. Stephen chooses to acknowledge exactly none of this. “Mobius M. Mobius, if you’re looking for the finer details on the print.”

“Let me guess, the M stands for Mobius as well?”

“Wow, that was quite a brain workout, you sure you don’t wanna sit down for that one?”

Okay, wise guy. “What do you know about Loki Odinson?”

The effect the name has is immediate. Mobius’s hand stills and he shoots Stephen a (wait what?) hopeful look. “You’re looking for ‘im?”

“Yes.” Stephen watches the man closely. “I’ve been told you’ve worked closely with the man before. I need your assistance finding him?”

“Who told you this?”

The corner of Stephen’s lips twitches. “Another kid who goes by ‘Loki’ and his crocodile—.”

“Alligator.”

”... Right. They said you were helping them out with something alongside *our* Loki and a third party.”

Mobius digests the information and heaves a sigh. He grabs a chair and sits down. “Poor kid. Must be so scared all alone.”

“Hardly. Honestly, he was pretty upfront and confident when confronting me.”

Mobius gives him an amused look. “He *is* a Loki.”

Which, okay. “So can you help me or not? We’re kind of on a ticking time bomb here.”

“Thought time already blew up three ways to Sunday.”

Oh God, it’s like dealing with the trickster god himself. “We have to find Loki so he can assist in cleaning up his massive cosmic mess.”

“Hey, now,” Mobius’s smile stales. “None of this was on purpose. Don’t go blaming this on him.”

Stephen raises a brow. Someone actively speaking out for the god? That was new. “Well, regardless, he was directly involved. I need him here and now before the situation gets worse.”

Mobius pushes forward from leaning into the chair and leans his elbows on his knees, deep in thought. He runs a hand down his face. “Yeah, okay, I get it. I’ve been working on my own end to try and find him too. Couldn’t. All of a sudden a bunch of Nexus Events were bursting all across the Sacred Timeline and the process of pinpointing a singular one’s activity suddenly became impossible.” He sighs. “I have no idea where he could be. Sylvie either.”

“Third party?” Stephen asks.

“Another Loki. A variant.”

A pause. "From another timeline?"

"Bingo."

Right, okay. He could work with this. "You speak like you're really familiar with our Loki's mannerisms."

In a baffling moment that Stephen has no idea how to interpret, Mobius blushes. "I mean, I'm an analyst, so..."

Because that explains everything. "And being an analyst means you... what-- study Loki for a living?"

Mobius honest-to-God nods. "Yup."

Huh.

"Think you can analyze this then?" Stephen procures the multiverse model one more time. Mobius lets out another awed whistle.

"Branched timeline?" He asks, standing up and walking over. At Stephen's nod, he lifts a tentative hand to a particular branch. It twists and weaves through his fingers and continues on its path toward the towering circular window. "A beauty."

"It's chaos."

Mobius sighs dreamily. "Yeah, I know."

They watch the branch reach the basking early morning sunlight streaming through the glass. The white wisps morph into gold.

"Loki is chaos manifested into a living breathing being." Mobius starts. "I've always been uh, entranced by the idea that such a wild concept could be compacted into one singular person. It was nuts and absolutely amazing."

Stephen isn't sure Mobius means to sound so fond, but he chooses not to point it out anyways.

"It got me thinking, *Hey, Mobius, someone like the Norse god of Mischief couldn't possibly walk around existence without rippling new bursts of unpredictable realities in his wake right? This being is made of something so pure, so untainted-- there's no way it wouldn't leave a mark.* So, lil rookie Mobius thought some more-- I thought to myself, *how different could their Nexus Events be to the rest of creation? Would they be as mundane as choosing a different ice cream flavor for dessert or are they as fascinating as the mere act of existing?*"

Mobius looks over at Stephen. "What I mean is: if we study them closely we might be able to distinguish and categorize Nexus Events by their chaos energy. And if we manage that--"

"We track down the highest spikes." Stephen muses, surprisingly impressed. "In other words, we find Loki."

"Yeah."

"And this hasn't worked for you before?"

"I mean..." That amused quirk of his lips is back. It reminds Stephen so much of Loki, he quickly finds it annoying. "This kinda happened just a little over a while ago. I still have a busted shoulder

from wrestling around with a former coworker of mine in her office.”

“Fair.” Stephen lets his magic runes go green. The amulet allows him to single out Nexus Events as they appear and, soon enough, billions of green dots start littering the predominant white.

“We’ll go along with your theory.”

“Alright. I can always go back to HQ and call for backup. Heavens know those guys want pay back for their losses too.”

“I’ll make sure to keep that in mind.”

Okay. Alright. This was starting to shape up. They had a game plan, something to pull through. Enough to keep Stephen’s panic at bay and enough for him to think up more plans for the future. It wasn’t enough to save reality as we know it.

But Mobius would have to be enough for now.

“Hey, this totally means I’m an Avenger now, right?”

Stephen sighs and walks off without a word, his Cloak close behind.

Until they find Loki, it’d have to be enough.

Harbinger of Chaos

Chapter Summary

“You sure this is the right approach? I don’t think it’ll be well received.”

“I hardly think accommodating her for our sudden visit is a priority right now.”

“I’m just sayin’, you could be a bit more empathetic about the whole situation.”

“Oh please,” Stephen rolls his eyes, fist raised at the ready to pound on the door.

“What part of me knocking on her door qualifies as emotionally distressful?”

His knuckles barely brush the wooden surface before a red blast splinters the door and rockets him off the porch-- skidding through the ground all the way toward the lake’s shore, leaving a smoking, fried trail behind.

Mobius snickers from beside the scorched door frame. “Oh yeah, that’d do it.”

Chapter Notes

Oh my gosh, this was supposed to only be a one shot but so many people wanted more, I simply HAD to write more!

Sadly, it means this is now a three-parter ;) (Good news tho! Next part will have Lokius :))))))

I hope you guys enjoy! This one's from Mobius's point of view.

-Lily

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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Stephen coughs. "Shut up."

The wood crackles as red flames begin to dissipate, slowly shrinking into themselves and putting themselves out.

Wanda Maximoff stands inside her cabin, hands raised and a cold glower slowly fading into a pinched expression.

"You're not from S.W.O.R.D." She says, voice thick with her fully embraced Russian accent.

"No, we kinda aren't." Mobius agrees goodnaturedly, peeking his head in. He offers her his hand. "Hiya, name's Agent Mobius, or just Mobius, really. I used to work for the Time Variance Authority."

Wanda narrows her eyes at the hand. "Who?"

"Oh, just a bureaucratic piece of shit organization that dictated the natural succession of time. No biggie."

"Okay... And your friend?"

"Doctor Stephen Strange, sound familiar? You fought Thanos together. Magicked the thousands of portals-- even a tiny lil' itty bitty one for the Wasp. Real neat."

She raises a brow. "Yes... vaguely." And leaves it at that.

Mobius retreats his hand. That wasn't going anywhere. "And I think it's safe to say you're the Scarlet Witch too, right?"

In an instant, her face morphs akin to stone as she takes a startled step back. Menacing red encases her palms as a warning. "How do you know this?"

"Oh, you know, one of the perks of belonging to an organization that works with the flow of time?" Mobius gives a sheepish smile. "We kinda know everything about you. Well, at least we used to. Now that everything's gone cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs, our information is pretty much unreliable now."

She blinks, lost. "What... What do you mean? What are you talking about?"

Stephen finally stumbles back up the porch step, face scorched, robes soiled, hair blown and wincing as he holds his shoulder.

Mobius whistles. "Did I or didn't I tell ya to think it over?"

Stephen glares at him.

The guy's a riot.

Mobius pats him twice on the arm before turning back to Wanda. "You might wanna sit down for this. May we come in?"

She stares at her two visitors, face void of anything that could give her inner thoughts away. Part of him thinks she'll just slam the door on their face and blast them off to kingdom come. Another, smaller and more hopeful, part of him hopes she's curious enough to entertain their attempts at conversation.

Thankfully, she steps aside.

“Please.”

“Okay, first thing’s first,” Wanda sits down on her loveseat sofa, fresh cup of coffee warming up her palms as she takes a careful sip. “How did you know where to find me?”

Mobius raises a hand, careful not to spill his own cup. “Oh, that’s on me.”

“How?”

Here goes.

“Okay, so, the Doc here and I are kinda dealing with, uh-- a bit of a pickle.” He scratches at the stubble on his cheek. “Basically, the flow of time split up and blew open like a handful of firecrackers on New Years and now we kinda need to find someone who can help. You remember Loki?”

“Thor’s deceased brother.”

“Right. So to find *him*, we gotta track down the highest chaotic spikes on the Timeline. I figured--”

“Wait, find him?” Wanda raises a palm, eyebrows pinched. “He’s dead, isn’t he? We’ve just settled that.”

Mobius and Stephen share a look. Mobius bites. “Well, okay, yeah, *technically*--”

“Technically?”

“Yeah, *technically* the Loki from the original, non-branched Timeline-- that is, to say, the one you and your Avengers buddies knew-- is dead. *But*, we’re dealing with another Loki: *my* Loki, from a secondary Timeline; a Variant.”

Wanda shoots a wary glance toward Stephen. She gets a shrug in response. “... Variant?”

“Yup.” Mobius nods. “It pretty much means someone-- in this case, it’s Loki-- that strayed from what was predetermined as the rightful flow of time and was both arrested and brought in by the TVA.” He jabs a finger at himself. “Pretty sudden change, really-- straight outta 2012, New York, with the Tesseract in hand. Anyway, he and I worked together for a while to track this other Loki variant that was causing mayhem all over time and space and pretty much increased the tower of paperwork on my desk every morning and then it spiraled into this whole thing we had going on, but whatever-- the rest of the info is pretty much irrelevant to the point.”

“Um... very well.”

God, the gymnastics one has to do with these people. Mobius sips his coffee to compose himself again. “Right, so as I was saying: I figured we’d speed up the process of finding Loki by working alongside someone who specializes in Chaos Magic. That’d be you--” He points at her. “-- And me being me, I recalled a certain point in your life where you’d be able to aid us best. Which is today, here and now.”

Wanda’s cup clinks under the strain of her hands tightening their hold. Mobius ignores this. “I see.”

She sets the cup down onto the coffee table between them. “And what makes you think I’ll help you?”

“Why wouldn’t you?” Mobius asks.

“Because all I do is hurt people.” She bites back, like this was common knowledge. “And besides-- if you know me as well as you say you do, you’d know I’m busy.”

Mobius nods solemnly. “Finding your kids, yeah.” He remembers watching them disappear for the first time alongside two other agents in the Time Theater. Broke his heart. “I’m sorry about that, by the way. You must miss them so much.”

At that, Wanda falters. She doesn’t do anything else, just stares at Mobius for a while. It’s suddenly very quiet in her living room.

Beside Mobius, Stephen flips through one of Wanda’s many leftover newspaper articles. “You held a town hostage.” He speaks for the first time since arriving. He looks up over the paper folds and levels Wanda with a heavy look.

Mobius frowns. “Hey, now--”

“Yes.” Wanda’s nails dig into her sweatpants. “Yes, I have.” She swallows. “And there’s nothing I can do to atone for the suffering I have caused them. Thank you for the grim reminder.”

“I’m only stating facts.”

“Yes, I thought it clear enough.”

“You trapped them for three weeks.”

“Is this all you came here for? Because if so, then I think you two have done plenty already. “

“No, no, of course not.” Mobius soothes. “I think Doc’s just a bit surprised and just finding this out now--”

“I’m not one of your Lokis, Agent Mobius.” Stephen folds his paper shut with a sharp snap. “You don’t get to psychoanalyze me.”

“I recognize that, but--”

Wanda balks. “Oh, but *you* get to prod at *me*?”

“Obviously.”

“Typical.”

“Okay, okay, let’s calm down.” This whole conversation was rapidly steering off a cliff and into a dumpster fire and by God none of them were wearing seatbelts. “Wanda, listen, we’re both well aware of the things that have ... happened in the past, but all the more reason you should trust us when we say we both want and need your help.”

“Yes, I can see how desperate you are.” She says, voice flat as she hardens her glare.

“I know it can be hard to believe,” Mobius tries to steer her attention back to him. She slowly, but surely, does. “But we need your guidance and your knowledge. You’re a natural on the chaos field and the only one we can manage to trust right now, regardless of your background.”

Wanda studies him for a silent ten seconds. She drops her gaze.

"I'm afraid I'm no good to you like this." She fiddles with her hands, yanking and stretching her worn out sweater sleeves over her knuckles as she tucks into herself. "Not when I can't move past everything."

"Maybe not," Mobius interjects. "But *maybe*, the effort to change that could be worthwhile." He taps a finger onto the table. "It's time to stop wallowing on the past and start focusing on more important stuff. Like your joy. Your future."

The air charges up with electricity (and suddenly, it's like Mobius is back in the Time Theater, an enraged god across from him and a flutter to his heart whenever he got to pry and coax his damaged heart open-- God, this wasn't the time) as Wanda scowls. "How *dare* you? Are you saying all those people-- their lives, their hopes, their dreams, their freedom-- were unimportant and that I should just, what, brush it off? Forget about it? Like they don't even matter?! Like the pain they went through amounts to nothing?"

"No, of course not," Mobius shakes his head.

Wanda laughs. "Oh, it's because it involves the 'big picture', is that it? Very noble of you, Agent Mobius."

"No, God, Wanda, that's not it at all." Mobius stresses, feeling a headache coming up (Loki's spun all kinds of distractions and misleadings just like this before. Thank God he's had practice). He leans forward, and sets his own cup down on the table, next to hers. "What I'm saying is, yes, you've hurt people. Countless times. Badly. Some even permanently."

"To the point." Wanda growls.

Stephen shifts in his place and Mobius feels his questioning glare to the side of his head. (Which is pretty hypocritical of him. Guess they're all hypocrites here.)

Mobius continues. "But, it goes without saying that you've been hurt too. Look, you've mourned and you've grieved and you've lost and lost and lost so much more than any of us could begin to imagine. That's just an irrefutable fact. Right?"

"It is." She says, voice neutral.

"But continuing to blame yourself isn't doing anyone any favors."

"What do *you* know?"

Mobius brushes off the ice in her tone. "Plenty, actually. Listen, Wanda--" He sighs. For a split moment, he lets himself feel exasperated and drags his hands down his face. He breathes in. "Nobody blames you for being who you are."

Wanda's lips set into a tight line.

"It wasn't your fault you were born. It wasn't your fault your home got destroyed and you lost your parents that very same night. It was never your fault you were captured and brainwashed by HYDRA either, or that you got these powers in the first place or how you've been warped and broken apart and molded over and over and *over* again so *badly*, that the mere attempt at being human detonates unpredictable consequences. You weren't actively looking to hurt a town, Wanda, you were *grieving*."

He hopes Wanda knows how much he means this. The amount of hours he'd spent locked away in a Time Theater, watching her life play out on tape never made it easier on his heart whenever he reached the Westview Anomaly. It was never her fault. She'd just lost her husband and her body lost control.

It was an accident.

When Wanda speaks, her voice carries heavier. "It still doesn't excuse what I did to them. It was my own actions that led to their pain."

"I'm not saying it does." Mobius offers what he hopes is a comforting smile. "You already recognize where the source of their suffering comes from: the spell from your grief. This is where taking accountability should come in."

"I *am* taking accountability," Wanda interjects, hands wringing one of her newspapers to near shreds. It's only then when Mobius realizes Stephen isn't sitting next to him anymore. It's just them two, alone, flying blind hoping they land intact. "I take full responsibility for the attack."

Mobius chuckles, shaking his head. "That's rich. You're not taking accountability, you're *blaming* yourself."

"There's a difference?"

"Blaming yourself keeps you in the past," Mobius smiles wistfully, a flash of black hair, blue eyes and green sparks flickering through his mind-- damn it, not the *time*. "Taking accountability means working toward the future. Means giving everybody involved a chance at closure and moving on, building up toward being happy."

The newspaper crumbles silently to the ground. Wanda's face contorts, distraught and guilt front and center. Her eyes fall back to her hands, now empty. There's a subtle tremor to them.

"I don't believe I can do that."

"Sure, maybe not alone."

She screws her eyes shut.

A heavy sigh sags his shoulders. Mobius had to navigate this carefully.

"Look," He chances standing up and moving around the coffee table to sit beside her. She doesn't move away when he does. "Wanda, I understand it hurts. It hurts hurting people without meaning to. It hurts realizing the fact that you could *continue* to hurt more people in the future when it's the last thing you want to do. But blaming yourself can only take you so far before you end up poisoning yourself."

Wanda looks at him. Her eyes shine with unshed tears. "You speak like you know of this firsthand."

"Mmm, somewhat."

You could have told me from the beginning, why didn't you? Because I'm the monster parents tell their children about at night?

I am a king!

Can you wipe out that much red?

Trust my rage.

Open communication was never our family's forte.

You'll never be a god.

I don't enjoy hurting people.

It's an illusion. Conjured up by the weak to inspire fear. It's a desperate ploy for control.

You do know yourself.

A villain.

That's not how I see it.

"I'm gonna be honest with you." Mobius says. "I came here hoping you'd help us because you're incredibly powerful, yeah. But, I also thought it could give you a chance at forgiving yourself and working to help make things right in here." He hovers a knuckle over her heart. Wanda looks conflicted. "Because of the Multiverse, we're basically exposed to all kinds of dangers and lots of people are being put at risk. Variants could look to crash another timeline and a full-out war could happen. I asked for you because I understand that you care about people. Not because I believe you're looking for some kind of atonement, but because I know you're genuinely kind. I really believe that."

He nudges her with his shoulder; she stares at the point of contact.

"I know you don't know me and barely know Doctor Strange in turn, and you can still refuse. The intention isn't to force you. Just know we came here because we believe in you, not just in what you can offer. And I've already settled you offer a lot. Did I mention that?"

Wanda snorts. "At least you're honest about it."

"Yeah, well, I try to be. People deserve honesty."

"You sound so sure of yourself."

"Practice makes perfect."

Her fingers tug her sleeves all the way up her hands until they're finally engulfed by the gray fabric. Wanda tucks her hands into her stomach and stares off over the couch across them and through the window, over at the lake on the horizon.

"You really believe that."

"Wholeheartedly." Mobius answers honestly.

"Is Loki the reason behind it?"

Mobius grants her the effort to mull it over. "Yeah, it is."

"You two are close then."

"I'd like to think so."

She's quiet. A hum or two resonate through their quiet space as she thinks, but other than that, Mobius can only wait for her to digest everything. A part of him feels guilty for opening so many old wounds all at once, but he also knows it was a necessary move for Wanda to believe his genuinity. He hopes she does.

A small breeze flutters through the cracked window.

Wanda tilts her head, as if considering whether the color of her wooden frames would look better in a lighter color. (Mobius rather likes them as they are.)

He waits her out. Then—

“You like your mind games, don't you?”

Mobius grins. “Scrabble's my favorite.”

She cracks her first smile. “Agent Mobius, you are quite the sharpshooter.”

“It's gotten me into trouble before, I'll admit. You got me here all nervous.”

“I believe you.”

“Yeah, well, it's not every day you get to meet--”

“No, no,” She murmurs. “I believe in what you've said. About me and the big situation at hand. I want to help.”

Mobius blinks. “Oh...” He says, as if those weren't the best news he's ever heard. “That's... hey, thank you.”

Wanda nods, then stands. “Still, I want my own intentions to be clear from the start.”

“Yeah... Yeah, of course.” Mobius stammers, noticing Stephen walking back into the room with a big book in hand. The Darkhold.

Once she notices him too, Wanda walks over and makes to grab the book from him. “They're as follows: I will help you find Loki and to mend the Multiverse. All I ask in return is that you aid me in securing a rightful timeline where I have my children back. You promise to help me get them back, and we have a deal.”

Stephen steps in. “Right, uh, see, it complicates things considering something like this--” He lifts the book high above his head, out of Wanda's reach. “Shouldn't be in your hands right now and belongs chained up in the Sanctum Sanctorum's Mystical Library. So, how 'bout you help us, and you get to keep the book for however long it takes us to save the Multiverse. How's that sound?”

The sudden switch leaves both Mobius and Wanda stunned. She blinks out of her stupor first.

“I get my kids or you're on your own.” Wanda growls.

“You help, you keep the book.” Stephen counters.

“It isn't yours.”

“Oh, so it's *yours*, then?”

“Yes.”

“Aha, no, wrong. The Darkhold is a horrible archaic weapon that shouldn’t even be allowed to exist. It’s a sick instrument people use for their own horrible, personal gain. It belongs in Hell.”

“I’m *not* using it for personal gain, I’m studying it!”

“Yeah, right, tell that to your Astral Projection floating by your bedside.”

Wanda’s hands burn red. “Hand. It. Over.”

“And risk you being corrupted by its power and killing us? No.”

Her face hardens like stone.

“*Okay!*” Mobius cuts in. “Look, I get we’re dealing with fucked up stuff, but do we really have the luxury of looking for other options? Huh?” He turns to Wanda. “And really, I’ve seen what she can do with what it offers. Objectively, sure, it might not be great, but it’s pretty fucking reliable. And effective.”

Stephen’s hand on the book tightens. His eyebrows pinch together.

Meanwhile, Wanda stares daggers at his face, burning holes through his head. Mobius settles a warm hand on her shoulder. The tension somewhat smoothes out.

“She can do it.” Mobius tries again, earnest. “It’s our best bet.”

Stephen lets the words simmer in the air. Mobius tries to imagine a scenario in which he’s denied and then Stephen leaves and Wanda kicks him out and now he’d have no leads on Loki whatsoever.

That absolutely cannot happen.

Not over his dead body.

But then, surprisingly, Stephen’s handing the Darkhold over. “Don’t get excited.” He quickly gets out. “I’m still keeping an eye on you. Religiously.” Afterwards, he walks out of the cabin altogether.

Wanda glares after him, holding the book close to her chest. Then she turns to Mobius. “Thank you.”

“No problem.” Mobius says. He nods his head at it. “Now, Loki?”

Wanda exits the living room (wow, she’s fast), moving toward the kitchen, and sets the book atop her island countertop. Mobius settles on one of the stools to her right.

“The Book of the Damned has many abilities,” Wanda informs. The book falls open and, with a flick of her glowing red hand, the pages start flipping rapidly. “One of them is reading the holder and providing the exact thing they desire. Machinery, spells, potions, truths--” She gives him a look. “--*Locations*. It’s able to hand over the information to you, should you want to seek it.”

Mobius nods and peers over shoulder to look at the pages. “So, if we--”

Wanda slaps his face away.

“Ow!” Mobius cradles his throbbing cheek. “*Why?!*”

“Don’t read the pages, they’ll corrupt your mind.” She answers simply.

There’s a knock from outside the window. “I’m watching you!” Stephen says.

Wanda shuts the curtains. “You were saying, Agent Mobius?”

“Uh,” Mobius does not laugh at the image of Stephen’s scowl being shut off by white, flower-patterned curtains. He doesn’t. (He knows who definitely would’ve, though.) “So, basically, if we wish to find, say, a Loki variant, the book just shows us?”

With a slam of a hand on two open pages, Wanda nods. “Yes.”

She gingerly retreats her hand and surveys its contents, her eyes carefully following each word as she reads. When she reaches the end,, she lifts her head up and fixes him with an odd look and a cocked eyebrow. “What’s a Sacred Timeline?”

Mobius resists the urge to peek. “Is that what it says?”

“It says your Loki variant resides in a location at the edges of time within the Sacred Timeline.”

The air swiftly leaves his lungs as realization strikes him. Loki and Sylvie. Alioth. “The Void.”

“Know where to go?”

“Yeah.”

“Urgent?”

“Yeah.”

A pause. “Is your Loki in potential danger?”

“Yeah.” Mobius says, quieter this time.

Wanda slams the book shut. “Alright. Tell your infuriating Doctor we’re moving, then.”

“Right.”

“One--” Stephen leans on the kitchen doorway, unamused. “I’m not infuriating. I’m irritated. And if I were, my frustration would be 100% reasonable. I didn’t ask for a fucked up Multiverse to be thrust into my hands. Two--”

“Hey, not to ruin your moment here, Doc, but we kinda gotta go like, right now.” Mobius stresses. He can’t stop imagining red over green over blonde over black over blue over *green*-- “Like, *now*.”

Stephen visibly counts to ten before exhaling and opening his eyes, still looking just as dead inside as he was ten seconds ago. “Fine. The Void? Let’s go. Coordinates?”

Mobius fishes out his TemPad from his pocket. “On it.”

“What the fuck-- I was *just* here!” Stephen declares into the wasteland.

“Maybe you just suck at searching.” Wanda sasses, examining what once could’ve been the Statue

of Liberty's torch. She offhandedly lifts a rusted helicopter axis, turns it this way and that, and drops it elsewhere. "Very on brand, I'd say."

"Hilarious." Stephen mutters under his breath.

Mobius just stands between the two, hoping he survives the overlapping waves of fire. "I forget you actually met the kid and his alligator. They get outta here okay?" He asks.

Stephen nods. "Portalled them away to Asgard. Some Asgard. Any Asgard. I made sure they reached their intended destination, is what I'm saying."

Mobius hums, "That's good." Eyes wandering back to surveying the gray expanse of pruned universes. Then he soon realises he shouldn't be able to have such a view in the first place. "Holy shit, Alioth is gone."

"Alioth?" Wanda tilts her head.

"Big scary monster who eats everything that moves and hates Lokis. They said they planned to kill it." It's basically a slip, but he doesn't miss how proud he sounds. His chest puffs out and everything.

How embarrassing.

"I'm happy they succeeded."

"Oh, so that's who that was." Stephen remarks drily.

"Why would they do such a thing?" Wanda asks over him.

Mobius recalls their game plan. *Alioth must've been acting as guard dog to something beyond.* "It was acting as a barrier. The idea was to get to the other side."

Stephen kicks at a damaged drone. "Well, did it work?"

The vague silhouette of a run down building stands on the horizon, its gateway framed by two massive walls of purple and gleaming green clouds. "Yeah, I think it did. Let's get Loki."

Mobius never expected to walk through a citadel halfway to ruin at the very end of time, but as a Loki enthusiast, he figures he'd pretty much signed up for a lifetime of surprises coming his way.

Still, the towering statues resembling the TVA's Time Keepers has him momentarily halting his stride. The obsidian-like matter cracks and crumbles under its own weight, hints of gold spewing through the crevices. There's a total of three of these pillars standing upright, framing the open hall they find themselves in. The missing fourth had been reduced to nothing but rubble.

He wonders just what could've happened here and who the people involved were. Then again, considering what he's able to decipher from all this, it must've not been pretty.

"Boys," Wanda calls from a few feet away. "There's an elevator here."

Elevator in a run down citadel at the end of time?

Sure, why not.

They walk over and examine her findings. Yep, the indigo, stone wall facing them caves and slides open like the golden doors back in HQ. Inside, a room very much resembling an elevator.

Stephen steps in, conducting a quick survey of the small space. “Yeah, she’s right.” He says, like that wasn’t already obvious. “There’s buttons with weird sigils here over by the wall.”

With a quick look between them, Mobius and Wanda follow him and settle by his side. Once the doors close, Mobius leans in to check the buttons out. “Oh hey, yeah, I recognize these! Same crypting from the TVA. Who’d a thought?”

Stephen’s hands twitch. “Which means we can safely assume whoever ran this place had direct access to cosmic control over time itself. Best be alert and ready at all times.”

Mobius nods-- “Smart.”-- and places a finger over the top button. “Going up?”

Stephen closes his eyes and counts to ten again.

Mobius pushes the button and viciously misses Loki more than ever.

He’s really not sure what to expect once the doors open back up. Maybe a crazed overlord? A shut-in mad man? Nothing?

Really, Mobius just hopes it’s Loki.

But what’s really on the other side has him losing all composure and running out of the elevator even before it’s fully stationary.

“Oh God,” He exclaims. “Sylvie!”

She perks up at her name and turns to look over her shoulder. Once she spots Mobius, she jolts up (she’s wincing, she must be injured, she doesn’t seem to be bleeding, maybe a sprain--) and fidgets in her place. “Mobius...”

Mobius hugs her. Sylvie tenses in his hold, hands still at her side.

“I’m glad you’re okay,” He murmurs, softening his hug enough so she could break out of it if she wanted to. “Didn’t feel like losing my favorite variant forever, ya know? Complicates things a little.”

Sylvie does melt into the hug somewhat-- she lays her forehead on his shoulder and sighs. Mobius counts that as a win.

“Are you hurt?” He continues.

Sylvie shakes her head. “No, Mobius.”

Okay, good. That’s good.

She softly pats at his elbow and he lets her go. Her eyes cloud over.

“You shouldn’t have come back for me.” She croaks, scanning his features over. Most likely a habit; root out the dishonesty and forgery before it was too late. It looks like she comes out with nothing. “Too risky.”

“Yeah, well, tough. I care about you, so the idea that I’d just brush you off is a no-go.”

Sylvie looks away. Then over his shoulder when she laser-focuses on the two other people in the room. “And who are they?” She asks.

“Avengers.” Mobius answers, not fighting back the smile at Stephen’s grunt. “Came here to help me out.”

“I see...” Sylvie treads her gaze through the room. “So..”

“That reminds me...”

“Where’s Loki?” They both ask at the same time.

A pause.

“Sorry?” Stephen shakes a hand. “Is Loki not here? I thought we were tracking Loki here.” He pointedly looks at Wanda.

She scoffs. “I did my part. Of course, we’re following Loki’s traces-- the Darkhold isn’t capable of dishonesty.”

“Right. The book from the Dark Dimension can’t lie. That totally checks out-- hey, remind me what you’re called again?”

“Tread lightly, Strange.”

Sylvie bores holes into Mobius. “I sent him *to* you.”

Mobius blinks. “What are you talking about?”

“The TVA! I sent him to the TVA!”

“When?!”

“Quite a long while ago!” She snaps, threads of fear weaving into her tone. “You should’ve been able to meet up with him.”

Mobius placates her with a grounding hand to her shoulder. “Sylvie,” He levels. “Loki never showed up to the TVA. Doctor Strange, Wanda and I have been tracking him for three days. It led us here.”

Sylvie’s face morphs, distraught. She darts her eyes from Mobius to Stephen to Wanda to Stephen to Mobius to the corpse on a chair (oh my god, was that there this whole time?!) and back to Mobius.

“Gods,” She trembles. “I’ve really done it now, haven’t I?”

“Done what?” Mobius gently coaxes.

“I pushed him away. I- I-- I really did. I--”

“This man here,” Wanda voices from behind them, gently gliding a few feet off the ground toward the chair behind the desk. “You killed him, didn’t you?”

Sylvie swallows. She nods tersely.

“Who was he?”

“The one who ran this whole thing. Responsible for maintaining a singular timeline and eradicating any other innocent being who dared commit the cardinal sin of straying from his vision.” She hisses. “Even existing meant death in his book.”

“So,” Stephen says. “What you’re saying is you’re the Loki who splintered the Timeline and caused the Multiverse.”

“My name is *Sylvie*, you twat.” Sylvie spits.

Mobius steps up between them. “Hey, hey, easy now. Let’s keep a level head, okay, guys?” A bit hypocritical (again) when he thinks about it (he’s trying really hard to keep it together right now), but it’s the right thing to say. He hopes.

God, please don’t let them see his growing dread either.

He addresses Sylvie again. “This guy you killed kickstarted the Multiverse?”

She really didn’t look all that pleased with the repeated question. “Apparently.”

“Was Loki here with you before or after you sent him away?”

“A minute before.”

Mobius frowns. “Before it splintered up?”

Sylvie nods.

“And you say you sent him to the TVA?”

“Yes, Mobius, I’ve repeated myself far too many times already.” She huffs.

“With what?” Wanda asks.

Sylvie blinks at that. Then she marches over to the desk and rummages around. She unveils a circular, polished stone. “With this. It acts as a TimePad; belonged to the dead asshat.” She nods her head that way.

Mobius grabs it without thinking and hastily begins browsing through it. If he knows a bit about a TimePad, it’s their ability to record data. Ravonna pretty much relied on it all the time. So did all the other analysts when filling up their paperwork.

With a feeble swipe to the left, Mobius finds what he needs. “Holy shit.”

Sylvie, Stephen and Wanda stalk closer. “What?”

“This thing... i-it still has the coordinates.”

The information sinks in. “Wait, so we can--”

“Find Loki, yeah.” Mobius grins.

“There’s no guarantee he’s still there.” Sylvie worries. “He could’ve moved. Or worse. Been pruned. Or *worse*.”

“Nah,” Mobius drinks in the numbers on the stone, etching them carefully to memory. “He’s okay.”

“How can you believe that?”

“He’s Loki.”

Wanda shakes her head. “You have way too much faith in the man.”

Mobius clears his throat, “Yeah, well. I’ve seen enough to justify that faith.”

Sylvie scratches at her arm, “Set yourself up for some hurt by doing that.”

“I appreciate the confidence you have in me by fully assuming I haven’t been on this rodeo before.” He chuckles. Then, he adds. “You have my full trust, Sylvie, and it’s earned. That hasn’t changed.”

She doesn’t say anything back. Behind her, Mobius sees Wanda mouthing, ‘*Mind games*’.

He shrugs, sheepish. Okay, it wasn’t his fault he could be decent at leading a conversation any which way. All he tries to be is honest and kind. That’s all.

Stephen clears his throat, “No time to waste. Since we managed to find *Sylvie* here, it’s safe to assume she can assist in fixing up the Timeline. We’ll be going back to the Sanctorum.” He turns to Mobius. “Know how to get back?”

Mobius taps the stone to his palm, rhythmically. “Yup.”

“Good.” A portal opens up beside Stephen. He gestures Sylvie forward. “Come on.”

Sylvie stomps forward. “Just so you know,” She says. “I’m coming because I *want* to, not because you said to.”

Last thing Mobius sees is the remaining strands of Stephen’s sanity dissolving into the air before he also walks through.

Wanda is staring at him by the time he looks over.

“Nervous?” He jokes. “I swear, second time’s the charm. You won’t even feel your organs being rearranged that vividly.”

She shakes her head. “No, I’m fine. Just…” The rest of the sentence trails off as she keeps staring. In the end, all she does is squeeze his shoulder and say, “We’ll be waiting.”

Wanda goes through the portal. It closes behind her.

Now Mobius is alone. (Well, alone and with a corpse of the one guy who commanded all of time. Talk about an awkward first meeting with your boss.)

The stone in his hands weighs far more than it should. Or maybe that’s just the crushing responsibility for bringing Loki back home talking.

He takes a deep breath.

He could do this.

He's bringing him home.

Or the Sanctum Sanctorum. Whatever.

Irrelevant.

With two taps, an orange portal of his own hovers before him. Mobius steels himself briefly.

Mission: find his Loki.

Game face on.

Now filled with conviction, Mobius strides forward and steps into the Multiverse.

Chapter End Notes

Next one has Loki and Mobius! Stay tuned (and thank you so much for reading and liking this stupid story I had no idea so many people would actually like it oh wow)

Kudos, comments and bookmarks are appreciated!

Come yell at me at my tumblr, @paper-lilypie

God of Mischief

Chapter Summary

Rapid footsteps sound to his left and he looks up.

Loki comes around the corner and halts as he spots him.

They stare at each other.

Mobius's face brightens considerably. "Loki."

Loki levels him a death stare. He twirls a pruning wand in his hand, not unlike he did his staff back in New York.

"... Loki?"

He charges at him.

Fuck. "Loki!"

Chapter Notes

Here it is! Last part of this little story and it is jam packed with Lokius ☺

Again, thank you so much for reading, I hope this conclusion satisfies you greatly!!!

Enjoy!

(Also Marvel can pry gender fluid Sylvie from my cold dead hands)

-Lily

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Now this couldn't be right. He's back at the TVA.

Wait, no, let him rephrase that.

Yes, it should be right that he'd be back at the TVA. Sylvie sent Loki here. That's the whole schtick.

But why does this TVA... *not* feel like the TVA?

Mobius turns in his spot, drinking in his very familiar surroundings and very adamantly willing away a growing migraine.

Why was he so weirded out? He was sure he was stepping off into the right coordinates, so he should have ended up where he wanted. The Time Variance Authority stands outside of time, so it

shouldn't have been affected by the whole ordeal.

It should be fine. He should feel fine.

Except...

Unless...

Mobius swallows thickly and tries to clear his head. One of their signature posters hangs on the wall opposite of him, Miss Minutes standing clear and center and brandishing the words: *Prevent a Redline, fulfill His wish.*

"His wish." Mobius reads aloud.

Hm.

Fuck.

Okay, so maybe the TVA being untouchable isn't as much of a truth as they've fed him.

The desolated hall he stands in very much looks like the ones back at home. Same brown palette, same dull atmosphere. But he can hear the faint noise of scuttling around. Some voices too.

Sounded like chaos.

A hell of a lot like Loki-chaos.

He pockets the small TimePad stone thing and sets off, eyes and ears open for what he could find in this alternate TVA.

Mobius quickly finds the answer is very much hysteria.

"What do you mean you lost it?!"

"I swear it was just here, I--"

"This cabinet is under lock and key, agent! Where is it?"

"I'm not sure--!"

"All equipment has to be turned in! You're risking any of it being exposed to breaching timelines and falling in the hands of Deviants!"

"I'm aware, but--!"

"Has anyone seen C-20?!" Somebody else chimes in the chaos.

"Has He authorized any of this?!"

"All eyes on the halls!"

Agents and Minutemen run around, brandishing weapons and paperwork and files and pruning wands and lots and lots and *lots of panic.*

Guess the Multiverse's birth threw them off their rhythm too.

"Mobius!"

He jumps at the mention of his name and swivels around, guard up. Hunter B-15 marches her way over, a hurry to her gait and a generous amount of sweat building up at her temple. Mobius takes notice of the tally numbers on her helmet. They've doubled.

He clears his throat. "Uh, yeah?"

Stellar move. Nice one, Triple M.

"Why are you here?" Other Hunter B-15 looks at him like he's out of his mind. Maybe Other Mobius was. "What happened to confronting the Deviant?"

"Uh... " Okay, he's got this, he's got this. "The Deviant? Yeah, I was on my way there, but got swept in by the commotion. What's going on?"

"What do you mean what's going on?!" Yikes. Strike one. "A TimePad has gone missing and the timeline has long passed the Redline and now we're struggling to contain newly brought-in Deviants! You said you were gonna interrogate the undocumented Analyst and see if he stole the lost equipment."

Hold on. "Undocumented Analyst?"

"Yes, Mobius! The one we had to wrestle away from you! Weren't you on your way to his cell?!"

A cell.

A cell.

"Right." He says through a clenched jaw. Stay cool. Keep it calm. "Where was that again?"

"Are you kidding me?" She stares. "You're kidding me."

"Just tell me!" Mobius says.

That snaps her back in focus. "Fourth floor!" She pushes him away, already running elsewhere. "Hurry!"

No need to tell him twice.

Mobius figures it's safe to assume this TVA follows the same layout as his own, and is quickly rewarded with the very elevator doors he was set on finding.

With a quick sweep of the hall he's in (gratefully empty), he steps inside and presses the fourth button, willing the damn machine to step on it.

The doors open on the fourth floor. Mobius hurries through the barren corridors.

Back at the TVA from the original Timeline, the fourth floor was designed as one singular grand room, equipped with all kinds of surveillance devices and weaponry, with four different gateways placed north, south, east and west around them. Each of them reveals a corridor leading to many, many more branching out. At the very end of these singular branches, stands a solitary cell for a singular Variant.

Or Deviant in this case.

The great expanse of the surveillance center opens up before him and Mobius heaves as he studies all four gateways carefully.

All he had to do was figure out in which of these mazes Loki was locked up.

Simple.

Mobius pinches at the bridge of his nose, eyes shut, and tries to slow his breathing. If Loki could see him now, he'd laugh at him. *Think smart, not hard*, he'd say. *A clouded mind doesn't suit you.*

Yes, he'd definitely laugh at him.

Should he see him.

Which Loki can't.

...

But Mobius can.

He opens his eyes and darts them at the wall of screens at the very center of the room. The glow of their broadcast shines bleak white in the orange of the overhead lights.

Mobius hurries over and scans each of the monitors carefully. About ten screens per gateway, nearly 50 in total. But he had to be able to spot it. If he was right he'd be able to pinpoint--

A small, slim figure makes his way through a dark corridor in the bottom right screen. Mobius squats and presses close to watch.

The figure momentarily pauses by a fork in his path, then heads right.

Yup. There's no mistaking that dull brown suit and mess of gray hair. He sees it everyday in the mirror.

Mobius books it for the east gateway, praying to anyone generous enough to hear he'd be able to catch his Variant before it was too late.

His step picks up once he crosses the gate and officially stands in maze territory. He could do this. *You're him and he's you. Focus.*

Mobius dives in.

In a sudden stroke of genius (or absolutely mental foolishness), he takes all rights. Right turn, right turn, right turn-- passing by doors and doors and more doors. Quickening his jog to a run, desperate to catch up.

Hope's all he has at this point.

And then he sees a glimpse of brown disappearing down a corner. Mobius chases it.

When he swivels down that corner, he spots his Variant at the end of the hall.

"Wait!" He shouts, causing his double to look back. He sees his eyes widen.

“What the--?”

There’s a brown door right behind the guy.

Please be a storage closet, please be a storage closet, please be a storage closet--

Mobius slams into his double in his confusion, and before the guy conjures a pruning wand, Mobius grabs onto the back of his collar and pulls him back. His left hand shoots to the doorknob, yanks the door open and throws his alter inside. He slams the door shut with a resounding *wham!* That echoes through the corridor. It clicks.

He jabs his elbow against the spot right next to the knob as hard as he can. It successfully dents the surface, and what’s underneath.

The door rattles as Other Mobius pounds his fists at the door, shouting and turning at the knob, fighting against it.

It doesn’t budge.

“Oh God,” Mobius breathes, backing away from it. “Never have I ever been so glad at not getting any field combat training.”

The shuffling from inside gives way for sounds of objects being knocked over and something that sounds like a broom slamming against the floor. The door still doesn’t give out.

Yay for the storage closet win.

Mobius hurriedly leaves it behind.

The problem with being stuck inside a maze is just that-- he’s stuck inside a maze. And while Mobius prided himself with being knowledgeable in the intricacies of the TVA and its works, he might have underestimated the concept of “alternate universe” a bit too much.

He takes a left for the hell of it and is face to face with another Miss Minutes poster.

The TVA expects excellence from new recruits / No breaks when on the clock!

So, he may be a little lost.

Mobius curses under his breath and turns tail.

A tracker would've worked great. Damn it, maybe his Variant could've had one on him. If Loki really was locked up, then there’s reason to assume he could have a collar on as well.

He grits his teeth.

How on earth was he going to find him now?

Left, right, right, left, another left, one more for hell’s sake, a right to mix it up, another right because he’s desperate, one more because he wasn’t paying attention, right again, right, right, right--

A sudden *bang!* echoes through the corridor and Mobius whirls around, heart beating wildly.

Without a second thought, he chases it.

Yes, he might be wandering right back to the alerted forces now looking to stop him, and yes, every part of him knows Loki would be screaming at him to stop being foolish and to look for a way out of the maze, but damn it, he has to check, he has no leads and no time to waste--

There's an open door at the end of this one hall. Blue light streams in from inside the seemingly barren room. Mobius stalks closer.

He peeks inside. It's empty, save for an unmade bed. Mobius examines the door instead. Looks an awful lot like steel.

Behind the door, a deep gash adorns the beige wallpaper. Like the door was slammed open.

Like whoever was inside bust out.

"Loki!"

The maneuvering through the corridors suddenly wasn't as dizzying as before. Back then, he was aimlessly looking for a singular cell. Now the person he was looking for was looking too.

He chases and chases and chases and wow-- now he knows how the Avengers felt when trying to catch the clever snake. (Because that's what Loki is; way too damn clever.) Kinda makes him wanna take back all the moments where he thought himself better suited for the job of working a Loki than others. Never too late to be humbled, I guess.

Mobius huffs. His legs ache from all the running and he's slowly losing valuable time. The fourth floor won't stay empty for long and it won't take much for Hunter B-15 to grow suspicious of Other Mobius's whereabouts either.

What does one have to do to catch a god around here?

Mobius accidentally slides a bit too much on a step and slams hard against a wall. He hisses and holds his shoulder tight. Perfect. An injury was just what he needed.

Could this get any worse?

Rapid footsteps sound to his left and he looks up.

Loki comes around the corner and halts as he spots him.

They stare at each other.

Mobius's face brightens considerably. "Loki."

Loki levels him a death stare. He twirls a pruning wand in his hand, not unlike he did his staff back in New York.

"... Loki?"

He charges at him.

Fuck. "Loki!"

The god goes for a swing and, with an unimaginable stroke of luck, Mobius dodges. “Loki--” He ducks another swing. “Lo--” He stumbles back to avoid an elbow to his gut. “Loki, listen!”

Loki lunges forward and Mobius lifts an arm to protect himself. Said arm is used against him when Loki grabs it, twists it onto his back and slams Mobius against the wall.

His shoulder explodes in pain. His whole face screams a whole cacophony of hurt. Still, Mobius tries to turn his head to look at Loki.

“You always manhandle all your friends like this?”

“No,” Loki finally grunts, pushing at his shoulder harder. “Just the fake ones.”

Ah. “Ya know, you could be in for quite the shock if you could just let me go.”

The grip on his arm tightens and Mobius hisses. “Damn it, Loki, it’s me.”

“Right. You’d be shocked to find out how little that matters to me.”

“*Me* me, Loki-- Mobius-- ah!” His shoulder is not having a great day. “Mobius, your friend! Sylvie said she sent you here!”

The grip falters. “Sylvie?”

“Yes! Sylvie! Your girlfriend! We finally on the same page now, or are we testing my other arm’s nonexistent flexibility, because lemme-- gah!-- tell ya, it’d make any Olympic gymnast weep.”

He’s abruptly released and he immediately goes to cradle his arm. The throbbing never ceases. God, this was gonna be a monster to nurture.

Loki steps back, eyes wide. “Mobius.”

“Yeah.”

“*Mobius.*”

“Heard ya the first time, pal.”

“You’re here.”

“God, I sure hope so.”

“No, no I mean...” Loki awes. “You’re *really* here.”

Mobius decides that’s a sentence meant to be dissected under the safety of the Sanctorum’s roof. “Yeah, Loki. I came to fetch you.” He fumbles for the TimePad stone thing in his pocket with his good arm. “Come on, let’s get you out of here.”

“What?”

He takes it out. The coordinates for the Sanctum Sanctorum are already set up. “Here.” Mobius hands the device over. “Procure a Time Door. We’ll be safe on the other side.”

Loki stares.

A weird beeping sounds above them. They lift their gaze and find a very active, very dangerous

camera eye fixated right on them.

Absolutely rotten timing.

“Loki, c’mon!”

“Right, right.” He fumbles with the device, face scrunched up in concentration. “Blasted thing--” A flash of orange later, the door stands before them.

Thunderous footsteps echo from afar. Mobius urges him forward. “Go!”

Loki gives him a look, then vanishes through the door. Mobius wastes no time in following his steps.

The door closes.

Good riddance.

They’re in the library.

“There you are!” Stephen rises from his seat, furious. “It’s been a week! Where were you?!”

Mobius exhales. “Finding a captive god. Pro tip: carry some Gatorade around with you, it’s quite the workout.”

Wanda emerges from another doorway, Sylvie right beside her (and wow, was Sylvie’s hair shorter?). “Agent Mobius!” She climbs down shallow steps toward him. “Are you alright? Any injuries?”

He offers a smile. “A few, but nothing I haven’t overcome before.” Then nods his head to Loki, who stands awkwardly next to him. “Brought a friend with me.”

“Yes,” Loki says. “Hi. I suppose that would be me. Say, who are you two supposed to be?”

“Unbelievable.” Stephen looks at Mobius. “He really is another Loki?” He gets a helpless shrug as a response. “Great. And here I was, looking forward to warping you to another dimension and leaving you suspended mid fall for an hour or two.”

Loki points at him. “You. I do not like you.”

“Quick development. I’m tempted again.”

“Let’s not.” Mobius chuckles, settling down onto one of Stephen’s sofas. The Cloak of Levitation hovers next to him for a few moments before settling on the backrest, greeting Mobius with soft taps at his arm. He taps a hello back.

Wanda crosses her arms. “Loki.”

He regards her warily. “Ah, hello. And you are?”

“Wanda Maximoff. Clint Barton sends his regards, by the way.”

Loki grimaces. “Fantastic.”

Sharp movement causes everyone to turn their heads back to the doorway. Sylvie is running back up the shallow steps; they promptly disappear from view.

From his spot, Mobius can see Loki tense up. He also doesn’t fail to notice how Loki’s gaze lingers on where they stood last.

Loki speaks up. “I have to go talk to him.”

Mobius raises a brow. “Him?”

“Sylvie.”

“Oh,” A door slams shut from afar. “Yeah, go ahead.”

Loki goes after him and is soon gone too.

Mobius sinks into the crimson sofa and doesn’t think about anything at all.

His shoulder throbs. The Cloak offers a small pat to his cheek.

The time spent at the library is quiet and surprisingly uneventful. Stephen keeps to his own little corner, francantly losing his mind until Wong stops by for a moment at some point (Mobius lifts a peace sign in greeting; Wong returns it, albeit a bit confused), asking for him-- something, something, time and chaos-- and soon only Wanda and Mobius are left. Well, the Cloak too.

And that’s one out of three people who are comfortable enough to participate in casual conversation, go figure.

“You’ve both felt it.” Wanda says, out of the blue.

Never mind, then. “Hm?”

She shifts in her own spot, legs tucked under her as she settles on the sofa next to his. She’s been doing that a lot recently-- leaning into Mobius’s occupied space. “Grief. You’ve both lost people you hold dear.”

“Yeah? Me and whom?”

“You and Loki.”

Oh dear. He hadn’t expected *this* kind of embarrassing confrontation to pop up this early on. And it’s Wanda who’s brought it up, of all people. Frankly, he has no clue where she plans to lead this. “I mean... I guess.”

“You understand each other.”

At this point, he’s sure him “understanding” Loki is a massive understatement, but okay.

Mobius closes his eyes. He wishes he’d gotten a glass of water or something. A nap sounds real good right about now. “Yeah, well. I try to imagine what it’s like in his shoes. It’s worked out. He’s been through a lot.”

“You have too.” Wanda prods.

“Eh, nothing worth recalling.” A dry laugh escapes him. “That’s what happens when you work for the TVA. They kidnap you from your life and make a clean slate outta you. Perfect little soldiers.”

“I understand that.” She nods. “But I was referring to a more recent loss. You’ve lost something you hold close to your heart. It’s how you’re able to understand me.”

Mobius opens his eyes again. That didn’t sound right. “Have I?” He asks, voice quiet.

Wanda nods again. “Or rather, you *believe* you’ve lost them.”

“Them?”

“Loki.”

Okay, okay, stop. No. We’re not going there. “I haven’t lost Loki.” He doesn’t sound defensive. He doesn’t. “Think I did the opposite actually-- I mean, did you *not* remember me disappearing for a whole week just to find him? He’s here. I got him. Hell, he’s in the next room over with Sylvie having a grand ol’ time.”

Wanda gives a knowing smile at that and Mobius suddenly wishes he wasn’t here, right now, at that specific moment in time. Anywhere else would’ve been fine. Preferably on a beach. With a jet ski.

Jet Skis couldn’t psychologically dismember you when your guard was down.

“Agent Mobius,” She starts, slowly. “For a man confidently skilled in the art of conversation, you sure do like to avoid it.”

The sofa’s quickly beginning to be way too small for him. Still, he forces himself to stay seated. “I’m not a big fan of being thrust under a microscope.”

“I couldn’t figure it out at first,” She says, fingers tapping at her arm rest. “but I finally noticed it. Back at the citadel. You were worried.”

“Pretty sure everyone here is worried about the state of time and space.”

“Yes, that’s true.” Wanda cocks a brow. “But you’re the only one here whose priority is Loki instead.”

Mobius swallows thickly. “That’s not true. Sylvie was worried about him too.”

“Sylvie wasn’t the one who grinned like a bobcat for getting a breakthrough regarding Loki’s location.”

Nope, nope, wrong.

That wasn’t--

That’s not--

Hold it--

“I didn’t grin.”

Wanda looks at him, incredulous.

Shoot, that wasn't what he meant to say.

She huffs a laugh, "Right, you merely *glowed with excitement*. My mistake."

He jabs a finger in her direction, because really-- he can't do much else without digging a deeper hole for himself. "You're funny."

"Now that's a first." The rhythm she had set for her fingers now grows sluggish as she thinks about her next words, eyes clouding over. "Loki has grieved recently." She announces. "I have no sense of worry over him. Don't think I will any time soon, but this could very well concern you." Her hand gestures at his general direction, like it single-handedly proves her claim. "You being close to him and all."

He's not supposed to like the way she said that. He's not and he doesn't.

"Right, Loki's my friend."

"Yes, he said that too."

"Right."

He *doesn't*.

The air around Wanda gives off the impression she knows something Mobius doesn't and it only makes him antsy-- desperate for a crack to slip through. An escape. As an analyst, Mobius prefers knowing which cards are at play-- both his and every other players'. It gives him confidence-- allows him to maneuver conversations how he sees fit. It's why he studied Loki so hard before their fateful meeting.

It's why he knows Loki so intimately.

The Cloak of Levitation pokes his cheek and Mobius swats it away with a startled chuckle. "Aw, c'mon, not you too."

It frills in its spot, like it's actually laughing at him. Honestly, the artifact really could be adorable sometimes.

Mobius pokes back at it, humoring it, and it soon returns to its original place on the backrest.

It's peaceful for a while. And after a minute passes, Mobius realizes he just missed an opportunity to bail and leave the room. Obviously, Wanda catches on as well and metaphorically grabs onto him with a vice grip.

"You should talk to him. You look like you really want to, and he looks like he really wants to too."

And Mobius nods because, yeah, okay, at least he could admit that. "I will."

"You better. There's nothing worse than grieving over something not lost."

"You sound so sure about this."

"Experience speaks volumes, doesn't it?"

Mobius glances at her, a smile on his face. "You know, you're pretty good at this mind games thing."

Wanda laughs. The smile looks good on her. “Thank you.”

“That’s good. Great on ya.”

“Yeah.”

The sun outside dips lower and the room flushes from sunset pink to dusk blue. It’s getting late. Stephen and Wong were still nowhere to be seen. Loki and Sylvie either.

Mobius wonders if Wanda is really right; If talking to Loki was really worth it. They had last parted ways fine. A hug before facing imminent doom was much more than he had expected. But if they were to talk things out, Mobius isn’t sure he’d be able to focus on keeping his overwhelmed (and greatly unwelcome) feelings at bay.

He bites his lower lip.

Loki being gone rattled him far more than he'd been letting on (He hadn’t lied when he told Strange he’d already been looking before they met. It hadn’t been that long, sure, but Mobius was already on the move). If at any point in their chat Loki so much as looked at him kindly, Mobius could very much do something very stupid. Like hugging him. Or kissing him.

God, help him. He shouldn’t be going through this anyway. He already has enough.

Mobius has a friend in Loki; Loki has a confidant in Sylvie.

It’s enough.

Floorboards creak as someone enters the room and Mobius peeks his head over the backrest, fully expecting Loki.

It’s Sylvie. He momentarily pauses when he notices both Wanda and Mobius watching him and gives them a small acknowledging nod. Then, he announces he’s turning in for the night. As quick as that, he’s gone again.

Loki never even shows up.

Mobius sinks even deeper on the sofa.

He wonders and he ponders and he thinks.

And in the end, he’s only left with Loki-riddled thoughts and no answers. How fitting for someone enamoured with the god of mischief and his tendencies for talking circles around his victims.

How infuriatingly fitting.

In the end, Mobius retreats to a room for the night (gets himself a nice glass of water too) and doesn’t think about anything at all.

Well, he tries.

Mobius’s jacket hovers over his bedspread as he halts his movements. This is the third time he notices it, and now he knows he hasn’t been imagining it. First time’s chance. Second time’s

coincidence. Third time's just asking for it.

So he waits.

It's quiet in his dark room, only a small lamp creating any kind of white noise as it basks a miniscule nook of his desk in orange light. There's no crickets, no cicadas, no honking cars outside on the streets, no nothing.

Still, he waits patiently and listens, giving whoever or whatever needs a captive audience his full attention.

It's silent.

And then he hears it. The softest hesitant knock on wood-- barely above a whisper-- coming from his door.

Mobius huffs, relieved, and sets his jacket down with a soft smile. "You can come in, Loki."

The door never opens, but Loki is inside the room anyway. "Mobius."

Mobius turns around as he busies himself with folding his sleeves up to his elbows. "Heya."

Loki hesitates in his spot. He doesn't seem to know where to move or if he should even move at all.

It's cute.

"Come on, sit down. Get comfy." Mobius sits on the bed and pats at the mattress, busying his good arm with untying his tie. "You doin' okay? How's Sylvie?"

"Sylvie's fine." Loki says. He doesn't answer his first question, but he does sit, weary eyes fluttering all over Mobius. Kinda makes him feel a little self-conscious. (He's not really in the best shape to be the object of focus of a god, okay?)

He waits for anything else.

But, Loki's not saying anything.

Mobius sighs, and gives up on his tie. "Alright I'll bite. What's wrong, Loki?"

A fog grows dense in his blue eyes, like anything past them couldn't ever be clear enough to articulate. Like anything beyond that cloud is both unknown and unrecognizable-- a contrast to how he, once warmed up, always wore his heart on his sleeve. Loki shakes his head, thoughtful. "Nothing, just..." He trails off.

Mobius waits. Loki lifts a tentative hand and hovers it centimeters away from Mobius's elbow. "May I?"

The question somewhat surprises him, but he barely gives it a second thought. "Go ahead."

Loki places his hand on Mobius's arm. The cold of his fingers seeps deep into his skin but he fights back the shiver.

His fingers squeeze and hold and feel the heavy weight from Mobius's arm. Mobius quickly deduces this must be Loki grounding himself. Honestly, it just makes him all the more worried for whatever tortures they subjected him to in that Other TVA.

Loki wasn't speaking and that was terrifying enough.

"Loki...?"

He finally lifts his eyes and locks them with Mobius's, set with a sudden crazed determination. "May I hug you?"

Mobius's heart breaks. Scared little boy. "Yeah." He urges him forward. "Yeah of course, come 'ere."

In less than a second, he's got an arm full of Loki, wrapping his arms around his middle in a suffocating hug. Mobius lifts his left (good) arm, hooking it around his shoulders and rests his chin over them. Loki has his face buried in Mobius's neck, breaths coming in shallow and shaking. Mobius holds him close and lets him cry.

"Hey, yeah, it's okay. I got ya." His fingers rake up and down his back in a soothing manner-- and then in a bold, split second decision, bury in his black curls. "I got ya."

The action only has Loki holding him tighter.

It's hard to imagine just what exactly could be running around in that clever head of his. Doubt, fear, pain, loss (damn it, Wanda)-- the fight with Alioth, being separated from Sylvie and later being trapped in an alternate dimension with no way out-- all of it must've overwhelmed him to the point of absolute panic.

He recalls the look in Loki's eyes when they first spotted each other in the Other TVA halls and has to restrain himself from tightening his grip. Something hurt Loki over there. And whatever that *something* was, Mobius wasn't letting it anywhere near him again. They could count on it.

Loki shifts in his arms and backs off, head lowered, as if ashamed. His eyes are red. "I'm sorry." He whispers.

Mobius is gentle. "What for?"

The lines on the god's face darken as he tries to compose himself. "I hurt you. I couldn't recognize you and now you're..." He eyes his shoulder, face souring the longer he stares (Mobius tries his best to somewhat shift it out of sight. He fails). "I should've known. Old habits are rarely uprooted."

"Come now, I thought that wasn't you anymore." Mobius says.

"Best believe we've both been fooled, then."

Mobius frowns. "Hardly! I mean, I can't blame ya for not recognizing me. I could barely keep my head straight when wrestling my own face inside a storage closet." Loki raises a brow at that. "It's only natural you thought I was an enemy."

Even if the charging at him did seem a bit over the top violent now that he thinks about it. Worth diving into later.

"You fought your Variant self?"

"Yep." Mobius remembers his tie and tries at it again. "Really freaky stuff. Don't think I'll be able to look into a mirror for a while."

“And you... what-- disposed of him?” Loki eyes his hand curiously. “Inside a storage closet?”

“Pretty heroic, huh?”

“How in the world does the TVA find a need for a storage closet?”

“Hey,” Mobius jabs a finger at him, teasingly. “Cat fur is no laughing matter.”

The open, flabbergasted look on Loki’s face makes the jab worth it. (Big win for Triple M.)

“And you did all this, injured?”

A shrug. “Well, I mean-- okay, it hasn’t been a great few days for my, uh, upper body section. I’m still dealing with the side effects of a tussle with Ravonna. But, no, the shoulder thing was all after finding you.”

“I see...”

“How long were you over there, anyway? You look like you’ve seen hell and back.”

“I’m... not sure.” Loki says. “But it was long enough for my hair to grow out. So maybe somewhere around a Midgardian month.”

Now that he says it, he’s right. His hair was already past his shoulders, very much like the one he bore during the attack on the Dark Elves at Asgard.

“For me it was just three days.” Mobius offers. “Well, day on and day off, non stop. But still.”

“Three days? *Three days* and still, I...” He’s looking at the shoulder again. “It was enough for me to...”

The words sting. Loki is already spiraling back down.

In an effort to stop it, Mobius gives Loki a swift smack on the back. “But, don’t worry about it! Look, it’s fine.” He says. “My shoulder needed an urgent rough shove two inches to the left anyway.”

“...Does it hurt?” Loki asks.

Mobius tentatively rolls his right shoulder. A rusted knife digs deep into his socket. “Yeah, a little.”

A sudden flash of green later, Loki is pressing an ice pack onto his shoulder. Mobius blinks.

“To stop the inflammation.” Loki explains.

“Right.” Mobius ignores the fact that now Loki has both hands on him (It’s like the tie-fixing all over again.) and focuses on bringing them both back to the surface. Do what the god does best. Lead them back toward normal and comfortable. *Talkie, talkie* and all that. “Look at you being all handy. Always knew you had a knack for medical treatment.”

Loki perks up. “Did you, now?”

God, so adorable. “I mean, considering where you grew up in, it’s only logical.”

“I was raised in a palace, Mobius.”

“Counterpoint: You were raised in *Asgard*.”

“As a prince.”

“So was Thor. Pretty sure he still ended up sustaining worse injuries in his childhood years than a newborn foal with rollerblades skidding on ice.”

He successfully gets a chuckle out of the god, which is kinda really amazing, actually. Makes him wanna take on Odin fucking Borson himself.

The recognition is highly addicting.

“Half of those injuries came from me, I think.” Loki says, fighting back a wistful smile.

“Ah, you mean when you--”

“Turned into a snake.”

“--And--”

“Stabbed him.”

“Yeah.” Mobius grins; He recalls sitting alone in that Time Theater for the first time, witnessing 8-year old Loki morphing back from a harmless garden snake and pouncing on his unsuspecting older brother, one of Frigga’s golden hairpins violently shoved into his abdomen, and thinking to himself: *Wow, this kid needs friends asap.*

Funny how life works.

“Thor totally deserved it.”

Loki cocks a brow. “Whatever happened to brute force not being a substitute for diplomacy and guile?”

“Oh, *now* you feel like getting smart with me?”

Loki finally grins. (Mobius’s heart does not skip a beat-- it does *not*.) “I’m always smart.”

Which, touché. Mobius rolls his eyes. “Right, sure. What I mean is, you were kids! Plus, Thor had it coming.”

“The All-Father would’ve liked to disagree with you.”

“Odin would’ve disagreed with everybody.”

Loki hums, shrugging. “Yes, I suppose so.” Then his eyes sparkle with something else-- something looking for trouble, and he asks, “Are you saying that you’d gladly flaunt yourself against Odin in my defense, Mobius?”

“Thor pushed you off a balcony!”

“Thor’s done a lot of things. Also, you’re evading my question.”

“How fitting for the god of mischief to notice.”

“That *also* counts as evasion. Come now, Mobius, I thought you were smarter than this.” Loki

teases, a full smile blooming on his face.

The ice on his skin could melt with how warm his blood ran. This wasn't fair.

Mobius was only human.

“Well?”

“I’ve literally vouched for you in front of Ravonna, Hunter B-15, her Minutemen squad-- hell, even Sylvie and the fellas that helped me find you in the first place.” Mobius boasts. “Odin would be a walk in the park.”

Loki’s lips twitch, but he overall fails to keep the softened awe from dawning on his features. “You know that should he hear you, you’d be struck down where you stand.”

“Nah, you wouldn’t let one of your newly acquired pals to be barbecued like that.” Mobius gives a cheeky grin. “As a Midgardian sweets connoisseur, I’m pretty much invaluable. You’d protect me.”

“You drive a compelling bargain. I suppose you’d be right.”

“Of course I’m right. Have you seen yourself in battle?”

Loki lets go of his elbow and switches his hands so he can hold the ice pack with his left hand. Then he’s propping his own elbow on his bent knee and resting his chin on his palm, an amused swagger to his movements. “Oh? Enlighten me.”

“Pretty sure I don’t need to.”

Loki tilts his head. “Hm, no, but I’m asking you to.”

“And if I don’t want to?”

“Then my request turns into an order.”

“I don’t take orders from you.”

“I’m a prince.”

“You’re a pussycat.”

Loki laughs, loud and clear. Mobius feels like he might as well float into the atmosphere.

The god’s nimble fingers adjust their grip on the ice pack and slide it a few inches closer to Mobius’s neck. Mobius does in fact shiver this time.

“Mother made a wonderful teacher.” Loki says, reminiscent. “It’s only natural I take after her on the battlefield.”

And yeah, he has no idea how right he is. Being Aesir gods, it’s a given that various battles will be sprinkled within their lifetime and Loki’s was no different. Let it be known, grace is rarely present in war, but whenever Frigga stepped in the scene, it’s like whatever bloodbath took place soon after became art.

And Loki, being Frigga's son, always turned warfare into a visual masterpiece.

“Yeah, no arguments there.” Mobius absentmindedly picks at his pants. “You were pretty cool when Ragnarok came around.”

“Again with the insinuation that you know much more about me than I do of you.” Loki groans. “And what even makes you say that in the first place?”

Mobius snaps his fingers. “You used your helmet as a weapon.”

Loki falters. “I what?”

“Oh and you did this really cool trick where you threw and caught both your daggers at the same time, it was super rad.”

“What?”

“And there was this pretty cool flip you did too atop the Bifrost. Tom Cruise would’ve burst with envy.”

“Excuse me, Tom who-- you know what, never mind.” Loki straightens up and waves him off. The ice pack moves back to its original position and Mobius kinda wishes he didn’t have his shirt standing between it and his bare skin. (Then he forcefully shoves the thought so far down, he’s sure Surtr has a brand new package at his doorstep.) “So all I’m getting from this is you’ve voyeured on my life for the sole delight in watching me fight.”

Mobius’s eyes snap wide open at that. “No! Geez, Loki, what do you take me for?”

“An enthusiastic onlooker.”

“Reassuring.”

Loki must decide enough is enough, because the ice pack drops from his shoulders and is set down beside him. “I’m merely teasing. I’m aware this was all only routine for you at your workplace, albeit brainwashing was clearly part of it. Still,” Loki’s eyes flash dangerously. “It is incredibly fascinating how even *then* you were able to carve yourself into anything other than a blind, faithful soldier and managed to grasp the human equivalent of intrigue. How did you?”

What was this, payback for the time loop he threw him in? Why was Mobius suddenly being thrust into these psychological proding sessions? “I dunno. Maybe I’m just hard headed like that.”

“Or,” Loki adds. “Maybe it’s your past self shining through.”

Oh. Right, that was a thing. “My past self.”

“Yes. You are a Variant. Maybe with time, your original personality managed to slip through the resetting-- I’m assuming that’s what resetting means, the brainwashing thing-- and allowed you to experience the genuine parts of yourself.”

“And one of my *genuine parts* is obsessing over your life because I get hyped when watching you fight?”

“Well, I’m no one to judge one’s guilty pleasures.” Loki dodges the pillow Mobius swiftly throws his way, cackling like a man satisfied with his damage. “Only you can say for sure, my friend.”

And wasn’t that a sad thought?

Mobius shuffles back toward the head of the bed, creating some space between the two until his back hits the wall. He slowly exhales and rests his right arm against a second pillow. “Not much to say when I barely remember it myself, then.”

The ice pack vanishes in a flash of green, leaving a damp circle on Mobius’s gray covers. Loki sits closer, right beside Mobius’s hips and he carefully steels himself for his next words.

“Would you want to?”

A pause. Mobius frowns. “Want what?”

“To remember.”

He blinks once. Twice. Then his face sets in hard lines. “What are you saying?”

“Back in the Void, with Alioth,” Loki begins. “Sylvie, he-- he taught me to Enchant. I can access others’ minds. And their memories.”

“Really?”

“Yes.” Loki’s eyes flicker between both of Mobius’s and wow, he has no idea what to think. “... Mobius?”

“Hm.”

“Would you like me to show you?”

He doesn’t know. He tells him this.

“Would you trust me to lead you through it?” Loki asks instead.

That wasn’t a hard question. “Yes.”

Then Loki leans forward. He leans and leans and leans and-- really, Mobius is only human and very easily prone to misreading this situation and doing something stupid when Loki only means to help. Mobius doesn’t lean in.

(He stops himself before he actually does.)

Loki narrows his eyes, staring straight into Mobius’s soul from a mere inch away. He lifts a hand and hovers it right by Mobius’s neck. “Will you allow me into your mind?”

And wow that’s a charged question. “Yes.”

Loki’s hand settles on his neck and (what what what) pulls Mobius close enough that now their foreheads touch.

No, his heart’s not fine, thank you for asking.

No, he’s not panicking, please stop asking.

“Mobius?” Loki says.

“Uh huh.”

“You have to close your eyes.”

“Okay.”

He waits.

Loki laughs. “Mobius.”

“Right, sorry.”

Mobius closes his eyes this time. Loki’s thumb brushing against his pulse does nothing to calm him down.

“Slow your breathing.” The god says, and somehow, Mobius hears his voice echo in his head. That does sooth him. “I’ll be careful.”

Mobius exhales slow. And then the world behind his eyelids bleeds into color.

The blinding lights fade and his surroundings come to focus.

Vibrant yellow walls, littered with posters, and an atlas. Wide windows overlooking a flourishing forest. And many many many desks facing him.

He’s standing upright, dark blue button-up and brown slacks ironed to a T. There’s a pen in his hand.

And as he blinks for composure, faces slowly come into view and Mobius realizes he’s not alone.

That’s right. He never was. Not for 10 months of each year, at least.

White noise bleeds out the room. Sounds of laughter, screaming, running and chairs scraping against floors rush in like running water from a broken faucet and soon enough, the scene comes to life.

“Alright, alright, settle down.” Mobius laughs, urging his students back into their seats. They scatter to comply, hushed giggles and chatter slowly ebbing away into pliant silence.

Even though he himself feels disconnected with the memory, Mobius finds his mouth moving anyway, like it already knows what to say and how to say it. Like it’s rightfully done before. “I know we’re all raring to go, so let’s do it in an orderly fashion. Start packing up, only three more minutes till dismissal-- ah, thanks, kid.” One of the kids returns him a cowboy hat (His cowboy hat...) with a toothy grin. Mobius ruffles his brown curls affectionately before the kid heads back to his seat. He chuckles and settles atop his desk, placing the hat aside.

His students (God, his students) fidget restlessly.

“Now, for the moment you’ve all been waiting for. Let’s talk about your essays.” A hush falls into the room, anxious eyes zeroing in on his form. “I gotta say, guys, you really blew me away. You touched upon some really interesting stuff!”

A chorus of relieved shouts and exhales resonate throughout the rooms.

One girl to the far left raises her arm. “Mr. Robinson!”

Mobius internally balks in surprise when his body responds to the name (His name). “Yes, Ingrid?”

“Will we be graded on this assignment?”

“No, Ingrid.” He smiles. “This was just me giving you all a chance for a small bump up your overall GPA.”

“I see.” Ingrid lowers her hand, just as enthusiastically. “Apologies for the interruption! Please continue!”

Asgardian kids were something else.

“Okay!” Mobius claps his hands together. “While this was your last assignment and I won’t get to see any of you until next fall--” Groans resonate in chorus. “-- aw, come on, now you miss me? Where was this love back in February?” He jokes.

A boy at the back of the room (Tukk, Mobius remembers) pipes up. “We forgot the 14th was a Midgardian holiday! We said we were sorry!”

“Yeah!” Someone else says.

“We gifted you flowers the very next day!”

“And a written card!”

“And chocolate drops!”

Mobius points at Idda (14 years old, wants to be a Valkyrie when she grows up), sitting by the window. “You’re right. Those were some A-class chocolate drops.”

“We know!” They shout. Mobius’s shoulders shake in silent laughter.

“Okay, okay, fair.” He lifts his eyes to the clock on the wall for the time. His mind supplies the information easily: one minute until dismissal. “Now, as I was saying, while we won’t see each other for a bit, I want you all to start brainstorming on what it is you want to be once you’ve graduated— and yes, I mean it. Your future career paths will be the main focus of our next school year and I implore you to really think about your goals and desires in life.”

Let it be known that never in a million years did he imagine he’d one day stand in front of a middle school class of kids-- Asgardians, of all people-- and urge them to prepare for their college life on Earth. What the heck was life?

His sister would never believe it.

(That’s right... He has a sister too. And a niece. Becca and Marjorie. They’re waiting for him.)

Ingrid raises her hand again. “Mr. Robinson!”

“Yes, Ingrid?”

“How does this correlate with our written assignment?”

“Very good question.” Mobius raises a hand of his own. “Can anyone remind me what the subject of your essay was?”

Five hands shoot into the air. Mobius focuses on a tuft of red to the left instead.

“Finn?”

The red-head behind Ingrid shyly peeks his head out. For some reason, seeing him makes Mobius nervous. “To choose and talk about any person we saw as a role model.”

Of course, none of that nervousness shows on his face as muscle memory leads his body through the moment. “That’s right. Thank you, Finn.”

Finn blushes and nods.

Mobius addresses the class again. “I want you all to reflect on that person you all chose and think about why it is that you chose them.” He explains. “Study them. Talk to them, if you’re able to. Learn why they’re your blueprint for who you want to be. Then bring your results next fall. Sound good?”

All 20 students nod. Mobius lets the moment sink in.

Aw, dang. He misses them already.

(He never got to see them again.)

At least it’ll only be two months.

(He’ll never be able to see them again.)

“Alrighty then! That’s all. You can scram and go back home.” Mobius waves them away, effectively triggering a sudden stampede of cheers and leather boots on their way to the exit. “No pushing!”

“Have a nice summer, Mr. Robinson!” Tukki shouts over his shoulder, already running down the halls of the schoolhouse. (He’s gone.)

“Yeah, you too.” Mobius calls back.

His classroom ends up empty, save for him. He exhales.

Two months.

(They’re all gone.)

He begins rearranging any array chairs and picking up whatever stray piece of paper could’ve fluttered to the ground during the ruckus. It’s not much. Mobius kind of wishes he’d have more to do before he shuts the door to this solitary classroom for good.

His pocket vibrates. It’s his phone.

Mobius knows who it is before he even answers.

“Hey, Becca, just finishing up here and I’ll be on my way home.”

“Oh, that’s perfect!” A warm voice sounds through the speakers and Mobius is suddenly struck with unimaginable heartache. “Maggie kept nagging me to call. She says not to--”

“Tell him about the tickets!” A higher pitched voice joins the call.

If he had any sort of command over his body, Mobius would've let out the ugliest sob.

"Right, right-- Maggie wants to let you know that you shouldn't forget your plane tickets."

Plane tickets. Right. Mobius is in New Asgard, Norway, working as a History teacher to Asgardian kids at their local schoolhouse. He was flying home for Marjorie's 7th birthday.

He has a gift wrapped on his kitchen counter, right next to his ticket.

Present Mobius laughs, "Tell her I got it all covered. I'm not missing that flight for the world. And if I ever do, tell her I'll swim my way over. I'm sure some jellyfish will take some pity and let me hitch on their ride."

Marjorie's laughter trickles in from the static.

(It hurts.)

"She heard you." Becca says. "But no rush, okay? It's a long trip and I don't want you breaking your brain over packing."

"Beck, I'm good." Mobius smiles. "I'll see you in a few hours, no sweat."

"You better!" Marjorie chimes again.

"Promise. Now, tell me abou--"

"Um," A timid voice pipes from behind him. Mobius turns.

Finn stands by the door, half hidden by the doorframe. His nails nervously pick at the wood and his eyes stay on the ground.

Mobius straightens up. "Uh, hold on, girls. I gotta take care of something real quick."

"Oh," Becca's voice breaks a bit with the static. "It's cool! We'll talk later."

(No, don't do it.)

"See ya, Beck."

(Please.)

"Bye, Marv."

(I miss y--)

Mobius hangs up. "Finn? Lose something, bud?"

Finn shakes his head.

Okay, then. Mobius walks over. "What's the matter then? Your moms not picking you up yet?"

"No, sir, it's not that." He murmurs. Finn finally lifts his head and nervously asks, "May I talk to you, Mr. Robinson?"

(Stop, stop, stop.)

A million thoughts run through Mobius's head, unsure if he should be alarmed or cautious or

supportive. He settles for the latter. "Of course. Come 'ere, sit down."

Mobius pulls out two chairs and they sit across each other. Finn fiddles with his fingers.

Okay, so he's nervous. "What's eating at you, Finn?" Mobius asks.

The kid bites at his lip. "Um," He sniffs. "About what you said, the role model thing..."

"Yeah?"

"You read mine?"

He does a quick search through his memory before nodding. "Yes. You chose Prince Loki, didn't you?"

(Oh.)

Finn nods.

"What about it then?"

"What did you think about it, Mr. Robinson?"

The question gives him pause. "Why do you ask?"

Finn interlaces his fingers together and holds himself tight. "You never brought it to my attention. I was under the impression you hadn't read it."

"Why on Earth would I do that?"

"Because," Finn says, drawling his speech. "It's Prince Loki."

That's...

"And that's bad?" Mobius tilts his head. Finn then looks at him like he's gone mad.

"Sure is! My heart nearly gave out repeatedly when trying to write it without any of my moms knowing! One of them was in the spacecraft, you know? The mere fact I considered writing about him should be cause for alarm!" He exclaims. Then, in a smaller voice, he adds "Shouldn't it?"

God, this was a beast of a question.

He guesses he should have expected something like this to happen. Mobius had heard about it before, how even after Thor's own public testimony and her majesty's King Brunnhilde's declaration on Loki's status as a hero amongst the Asgardian people, there was still a minute group who firmly believed the mischievous god had played them like fiddles and personally led them straight to Thanos. They believe Loki was on the side of villainy up until the very end when he died in the craft's explosion.

Mobius chooses his next words carefully. "Well, I don't know about should or shouldn't. What I do know is that you made your choice and decided to write about Prince Loki." He leans forward on his knees and holds eye contact. "I'm guessing that's what really worries you— choosing him over any other."

Finn's lips flatten into a tight line. He nods.

Alright then. "And you wanted me to know about it?"

Another nod.

"Want to keep talking about it, then?"

"Yes."

"Okay." Mobius sits straighter, emotionally preparing himself. "So you chose to write about Prince Loki. You decided he was your role model. Those are facts. Why did you?"

The boy's grip on his hands tightened considerably. "I don't know."

"I think you do." Mobius counters gently. "You wouldn't have taken the leap otherwise."

Finn says nothing.

"Right?"

No answer.

"Unless I'm wrong."

"It's just..." The words shrink and the rest of the sentence dissipates as Finn struggles to speak. Another minute passes without talking and Mobius starts to worry on his handle over the conversation.

Yet then...

His eyes widen a smidge as he gets an idea.

(No.)

It could work, if he words it carefully.

(No.)

But maybe it wasn't his place to present it.

(Exactly.)

It's not a big deal. It shouldn't be a big deal.

But what did he know about what was right and what wasn't in this situation? Mobius is just some guy from California working on a doctorate and a passion project. Asgardian culture and their views run deeper than whatever meager attempt at consoling a child he could conjure up.

But Finn is right here and so was Mobius. With a way to decidedly steer the child right.

He takes a deep breath.

Mobius now has a choice to make. End the conversation here or push for the very risky idea he's just hatched up. It could very well lead the child on and introduce him to very difficult conversations in the future.

But he's a teacher, damn it. His job is to guide his students toward finding their place in the world and help them bloom into the best versions of themselves they can be.

(Please.)

Finn needs guidance.

(Please.)

Mobius makes his choice.

“Lemme show you something.” He pats at his knees as he stands up and walks to his desk. There, he opens one of his drawers and rummages through various folders inside. Finn peeks curiously from his spot, eyeing the paperwork as Mobius flips them this way and that.

He finds his target and hands it over to Finn. “Take a look at this.”

Finn gingerly takes the folder and reads the front page aloud. “The unearthed doctrines and counsels of goddess Frigga’s sorcery and clairvoyance.” He looks at Mobius. “What is this?”

“That,” Mobius taps at the folder. “Is a copy of all the documented finds we’ve managed to accumulate about the history of magic in Asgardian culture. Everything from the very basis of how your society was built and how it flourished, complete with the whens and wheres and a little bit of the whys, all by Frigga.”

Finn’s eyes blow wide. Suddenly, he’s all the more careful with his hands as he handles the print. “That’s amazing!” He gasps. “It’s all here? Really?”

“Well, only what we’ve been able to find so far.” Mobius says. “As rare as sorcerers are in your people, Asgard’s got quite the timeline to go through-- and that’s excluding the rest of the Nine Worlds, of course.”

Finn brushes a thumb over the black ink brandishing Frigga’s name in awe. “Why do you show me this?” He asks.

Mobius smiles and taps at the paper again. “The one who actually compounded all of this information and-- really-- the only reason why we even have it to this day, was Prince Loki.”

Finn stares. He darts his eyes from Mobius, then to the folder, then back to Mobius, then the folder. Then, “Did he?”

“Yup. Pretty cool of him, huh?”

A beat. Finally, Finn nods, “Yes.”

Mobius smiles. Jackpot. “The cool thing about Loki,” He opens the folder onto its first page. “Is that he’s always been an advocate for knowledge and strategy over conquest and warfare. I like to assume it’s because he takes after their mother.”

The page shows an index column, brandishing all the different contents it harbors in numerical order, and a singular picture of Frigga donning her signature golden robes, a mischievous upward tilt to her lips, looking like she knows a secret the reader clearly doesn’t. In a way, she did.

It’s Mobius’s favorite picture of her.

“Loki favored the erudite-- that is to say, the intellectual. He was smart, and cunning, and very well an amazing strategist. He was also deemed the best liar around.”

Finn frowns at this. “Is that not a bad thing?”

“Lying? Sure is. It’s bad. Don’t do it.” He raises a finger. “But, I use this as an example to stress the fact that Loki held the sharpest tongue in Asgard, and that’s what made him so popular.”

“What about all the evil things he’s done?”

“Oh yeah, that got him famous too. He’s done a whole bunch, including killing nearly a hundred people in New York 13 years ago, plus my sister’s brand new SUV.”

It was a pretty black color, too.

“I’m sorry for your loss.” Finn says, clearly unaware of what an SUV actually is. “But…?”

“But, sometimes, we don’t get to see the full picture. Look Finn, I’ll admit: I didn’t like Loki at first either. Honestly, all I saw was wreckage on my TV screen and a power-hungry villain looking to hurt the ones I loved.” (And look at him now) “But the thing is, I absolutely don’t know the guy. Someone’s past actions don’t define them, it’s whether they possess a commitment to change that does. I never found out what exactly transpired in Loki’s life that led him to commit those crimes. But I can always look for the right answers in the right places.” Mobius flips to the second page. Images of both royal princes greet them. “In this case, best thing you can do is hear out Prince Thor. You know what he said?”

“He says it’s Thanos’s fault.” Finn murmurs. “He says Prince Loki was under a spell. That Prince Loki never wanted to be bad. That he was hurting.”

“Do you believe him?”

Hesitation causes the boy to freeze up. All rigid and frightened.

“I promise you, Finn,” Mobius reassures him. “Nothing you say will leave this room. This is between you and me.”

The air thickens as the silence stretches on. It reaches the point where Mobius starts to think he may have pushed too far.

Then Finn’s fear crumbles and he’s shaking. “I don’t want my moms to hate me too.”

Alarms. Yep, those are definitely alarms ringing in his head. “Why would they?”

Finn sniffs. Then he’s setting the folder down on his lap and shows him both his hands. A second later, they burst with life, wisps of blue and white streaming from his fingertips as they smoke up and dissipate between them.

Mobius gapes at the spectacle.

“They say magic corrupts.” Finn’s voice wobbles as he desperately continues shoving both hands forward. “They say it’s what made the prince evil. But I always thought my magic could be helpful. That I could be good. That people could believe in me like Prince Thor did Prince Loki. I wanted that so bad when I found out I was just like him.”

Finn drops his hands and lowers his head, tears littering the folder on his lap.

“Mr. Robinson, I don’t want to be evil.”

(You’re not. God, you’re not. You never were. You’ll never be.)

“Hey,” Mobius’s voice lowers to a whisper as he kneels on the ground bringing Finn into a hug.

“Hey, it’s fine. Shh, it’s okay. You’re okay.” He holds onto his shoulders tight as Finn hiccups and cries. “Magic doesn’t make you bad. Wanting to be like Loki doesn’t make you bad either.”

“But my moms will hate me.” Finn cries.

“Your moms would be so proud of you.” Mobius says. “A sorcerer in the family. A wonderful young man like you, looking to help your people. Big-hearted, creative, noble, sharp as a tack and headstrong as all hell.” He leans back just enough to look Finn in the eye. “Finn, you’re already so much like him. And all I see in you is potential for greatness.”

(Glorious purpose.)

Finn shakes in his spot, tears everflowing. He can’t answer, but Mobius doesn’t need him to.

“How about you take the stack home and browse it in your own time, huh? How’s that sound?”

“I think I’d like that, Mr. Robinson, sir.” He sniffs. “Thank you.”

Mobius smiles warmly. “Of course.”

No regrets.

A door materializes at the back of the room, making both of them jolt in the spot. Six people dressed in black armor step out, and Mobius quickly notices the wands they carry at hand.

He shoots up from his seat and grabs at Finn, urging him to back away as well. “Uh, can I help you?”

A woman at the center of the pack steps forward, an iPhone-like device at hand. “Variant identified. Let’s get this over with.”

Mobius frowns. “What?”

“On behalf of the Time Variance Authority, Marvin Robinson, we hereby arrest you for crimes against the Sacred Timeline.”

“Mr. Robinson?” Finn squeaks at his side.

“Uh, I--” Mobius blinks, willing his heart to stop racing. What was this? Who were these people?

“Hands up. Let’s go.” Three of the armored men hold up their wands like guns and suddenly, the ends facing Mobius burst in menacing sparks, like a live wire.

“Finn,” Mobius keeps a level tone, making sure to not stray his eyes from the strangers. “I need you to leave and contact Bruce Banner about the situation here at school.”

His eyes widen. “What?”

“He’s supposed to be in a meeting with Her Majesty deep in town. Alert anyone else you can. Tell them the strangers are armed.”

“But--!”

“Finn,” Mobius spares him a glance. “I’ll see you next fall. Go, I’ll take care of this.”

Finn pants as he’s split apart by either staying or leaving. He looks at the men in armor. Then at

Mobius.

Finn runs off.

Thank God.

“Now,” Mobius tries. “Let’s talk about this.”

Two of the men charge and grab both his arms, slamming him onto his desk. They place something around his neck and yank him back up right.

“Let’s go.” The woman says. “Prune it.”

Mobius catches one of them placing something on the ground and recalls a unique clicking sound as the device is activated.

Then he’s gone too, the floor hissing and disintegrating behind him as the rest of his life evaporates before his very eyes.

When he opens his eyes, Loki is already staring at him.

Mobius stands from the bed without a word and paces.

He can’t think straight.

So he paces some more.

Then he’s pulling out the chair from his designated desk and sits.

It reminds him of him sitting across from Finn in the classroom and it makes everything so much worse.

All of it is suddenly so much worse than ever.

Mobius hides his face in his hands and stays that way for a while.

Heartache was never a problem. At worst, it used to be a stranger. God, he wishes he never met it. He wishes and wishes and wishes.

His heart hurts.

The bed creaks, sharp but as quiet as an afterthought, and is soon followed by soft thuds, echoing each other as they near the chair. They pause beside Mobius.

Calloused hands brush against his and coax him to pry them off his face. Mobius does and looks up at Loki.

Empathy. It hurts.

Loki slips both hands on his cheeks, caressing his face with his thumbs. He slides them down his neck, to his collarbone, and latches onto his tie. He unravels it from Mobius’s neck with ease; he sets it on the desk behind him.

Afterwards, Loki offers him an open palm. Mobius stares. Then he takes it.

He's led back to the bed. They both lay down on the plush mattress, slowly as Loki takes note of his bad shoulder, and they rest, facing each other.

Loki has one of his hands in Mobius's hair, nails scratching comfortably at his scalp. He can't bring himself to tell Loki to stop, to tell him that this could lead somewhere they wouldn't be ready for, that it could ruin their relationship or worse. Ruin his and Sylvie's.

Mobius closes his eyes and tries to enjoy what little of his life he has left.

Loki is in it and that was enough.

It was.

"Marvin?" Loki whispers into the space between them, cautious, like Mobius was a minefield and one jerk move could detonate him.

Mobius opens his eyes. "Don't call me that."

"Is that not your name?"

"I'm hardly that person anymore, am I?"

Loki scratches at Mobius's nape. "No, I don't think so."

"Right."

"Do you miss your old life?"

"You miss yours, don't you?"

"I miss something I never got to have." Loki clarifies. "But you had everything. Family, passion, contentment... I apologize if the question is too much, though. I'll refrain from asking any more."

Mobius sighs deeply. He tilts his head slightly so Loki's fingers reach the back of his ear instead. "Nah... I don't mind. I guess I do miss it, yeah. Still kinda wrapping my head around the fact that I was a whole other person with a completely different life than the one I lead now. It's crazy."

"I don't doubt it. Will you try to go back to it?"

"Can't, Loki."

"But would you want to?"

Mobius thinks about Jet Skis and lost dreams. He thinks about Becca and Marjorie, how he never caught his flight and attended her birthday party. He thinks about his students, how he never got to see them grow up and take on the world. He thinks of Finn, the catalyst; the fork on the road that swerved Mobius in the wrong direction.

He thinks of all these things and how much it hurts that he never got to live his life.

Then he remembers the actions that led to him being stuck in the present day. The words he said, the nearly desperate need to console and care for a lost child. The bright smile from a kid who, for a fleeting moment, believed he was good and was capable of anything of the same sort.

He thinks of Loki.

“No.” Mobius replies, trying for a smile. It’s only half-easy for him. “I built a good enough life here and I don’t plan to leave it halfway too.”

Loki hums. His hand stills and refers to stroking his hair instead. “You call your life at the TVA good?”

“Any life with you in it is good enough to live.”

The hand halts. Loki stares, hard.

Sigh.

Stupid blissful head rubs. May you die a thousand deaths.

“You can scratch that out as me being tired and emotionally scatterbrained.” Mobius does his best to sound casual. He’s not sure he succeeds. “Or, ya know. Just pretend I never said it.”

Loki continues to stare. His lips part, words at the tip of his tongue. Still, he remains silent.

Mobius fidgets under his gaze. “Come on, now. Let’s not make a big deal out of it.”

“Why shouldn’t we?” Loki asks suddenly.

“Why should we?” Mobius counters.

Loki falls back on the quiet.

Mobius clears his throat. “Do I have something on my face?”

He shushes him.

“Don’t shush me, Loki.”

“Be quiet, Mobius.”

“Why?”

“I’m trying to... do something.”

“Oh, are you?”

Loki frowns, “Yes, but you’re making this impossible.”

Mobius huffs a small laugh. The heartache eases. “Right. I forget you get a little stage fright whenever we go off script.”

“Hush.”

“I’ll make it easier for you. Look, I’ll close my eyes.”

Loki looks frantic. “No, don’t.”

“I won’t even look at ya.”

“Don’t do it.”

“If it’s the push you need—“

“Mobius.”

“—To do whatever you feel you have to do—“

“No.”

“—Then I’m closing ‘em.”

“Mobius!”

Mobius closes his eyes.

And a split second later, Loki is kissing him.

Fog fills his head, clouds up his freight train of thoughts, halts all activity that wasn't laser focusing on the point of contact on his lips. So, so very warm. And cold. Exciting. Relieving. A mess. Perfect. Chaotic. His heartache dulls. His pulse runs and runs and runs and runs--

“You know,” Mobius murmurs the second Loki pulls back, voice just a *little* bit hoarse. “I kinda didn’t expect that.”

“You’re joking.”

“Hey, when you’ve wanted something like this for as long as I have, you start losing hope too.”

“I didn’t,” Loki cuts in. “I don’t. Never did. Do. Whatever.”

“Silver tongue.”

“Shut up, I’m making this up as I go.”

“Welcome to the normal world. We’re all hopeless romantics here.”

“Really, as a prince, I should be able to articulate my feelings better.”

“Oh, Prince Loki,” Mobius teases, grinning brightly. “What an honor.”

Loki huffs, kissing him again. (Warm, cold, warm, cold--) Once he does, Mobius manages to lift his right arm enough that he cradles Loki’s cheek in his hand. It’s somehow better than the last. (Perfect, just right.) “This is what you do to me.” He whispers.

“Just means we’re on equal ground.” Mobius sighs into a third kiss. Then a fourth press of their lips. Loki hoists himself up, gently pushing Mobius onto his back, and tilts his head just so for a fifth kiss. It later leads to a sixth.

His heartache is reduced to a mild throb at the very back of his ribcage. A figment of what it used to be.

Now he just wants to stay like this, suspended in time, forever.

It's perfect, just right. It's more than enough.

There’s a knock at the door.

Mobius cuts their session short (Loki pouts and Mobius wants nothing more than to kiss it away--

God damn it) and raises his head just enough to watch the door. “Yeah?” He asks.

“Agent Mobius, a quick word.” Stephen talks through the door.

Mobius looks up at Loki, who stares back just as dumbfounded. Mobius shrugs. *I don't know*, he mouths.

With a crooked smile, Loki figures it best he makes himself scarce.

Mobius opens the door once Loki is gone. “Yep?”

Stephen gives a swift sweep of his room before his eyes settle back on Mobius. “I wanted to let you know that preparations for our future time jumps are already under development and that we’ll be able to depart as soon as tomorrow morning. Your help has already been greatly appreciated, but it wouldn’t hurt to keep our offense on the lookout. You said you know people that can help?”

“Oh yeah, a butt load.” Mobius nods.

Stephen offers a tight smile. “Right. Okay. I ask that you notify them of our plans and to leave them on standby. We may need them more than ever should things go awry.”

“Makes sense.”

They stand at the door with nothing more to say. Stephen looks inside his room again. “Have you seen Loki anywhere?”

“No.” Mobius lies. “He might still be roaming around the place, though. He’s a fan of shiny, breakable things, so the artifact room may be a good place to start looking.”

Stephen looks like 10 years just got scrapped from his life. “Shiny, breakable...” He sighs. “Yeah, okay. Thank you for notifying me. Good night.”

“Yep. Night.” Mobius shuts the door.

He sighs too.

Arms wrap around his middle and a chest presses onto his back. Loki hooks his chin over Mobius’s left shoulder. “I’m hardly that much trouble.”

“You’re a fucking menace, Loki.”

“I’m a delight. A respectful guest. I say “please” and “thank you” and “you’re welcome”.

“You also steal things.”

“Oh what, like your heart?” Loki teases, placing a kiss atop Mobius’s pulse.

So unfair.

“Very poetic. That t-shirt’s definitely looking up now.”

Loki gives an exasperated sigh. “Yes, yes, I’m a bountiful source for stereotypically motivational mottos and you’re smitten, can we go back to bed?”

Mobius looks over his shoulder. “Sure. I’m tired.”

Loki laughs and continues littering his neck with kisses. “Oh, but I wasn’t insinuating we sleep, dear Agent.”

Against his better judgement, Mobius is craning his neck for more. “We gotta wake up early tomorrow Loki. We need our eight hours.”

The arms around his waist pull and lead Mobius backwards onto the mattress again. “Then we don’t have another second to waste.”

“You guys look like shit.” Sylvie announces over their morning coffee, seemingly comfortable enough to hold a conversation now. “Had a tussle with the pillow, did we?”

“Something like that,” Mobius says.

Wanda nods approvingly over on her seat on the sofa. Stephen exits the room preemptively.

Loki smiles one of his secret smiles into his own cup, clearly enjoying whatever turbulence his arrival has created within the group. He shares that same smile with Mobius and Mobius returns it.

It's more than he could ever ask for. It's more than enough.

“Alright, people,” Stephen calls from afar. “Let’s cut the chitchat. Time to work.”

“Got it, Boss.” Mobius jabs, unashamed.

It’d have to be.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that's that for now!

Kudos and comments are appreciated!

You can always come yell at me at my tumblr @paper-lilypie

Ciao!

End Notes

Come yell at me about the Loki finale at my tumblr @paper-lilypie!!

Thanks for reading :)

Kudos, comments and bookmarks are appreciated.

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